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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. EMMER of Minnesota).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 2, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM EMMER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

DHS FUNDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. TAKAI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAKAI. Mr. Speaker, there is a letter from me sitting on your desk today asking you to pass a clean funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security. All Democrats in the House have introduced and cosponsored a clean bill, and the Republican-controlled Senate has passed one as well.

Mr. Speaker, clause 2 of House rule XXI prohibits inclusion of language "changing existing law," commonly referred to as the prohibition on legis-

lating on appropriations bills; yet that is why the House comes in today facing another deadline that puts our national security and DHS workforce at risk—because we are trying to legislate through appropriations.

I am completely in favor of the deliberative process by which this body is supposed to conduct itself, and, while I support the President's executive action on immigration reform, I would also support a robust debate on it in this House.

However, you know as well as I do that forcing this debate through holding hostage the funding of a critical component of our Nation's security is not the proper way to go about having this debate.

At the beginning of the 114th Congress, you wrote an op-ed with Senate Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL entitled "Now We Can Get Congress Going." That is what I wrote to you and urged you to do today, Mr. Speaker.

Let's pass a clean DHS funding bill and get going with the tough legislative choices that we have to make this year.

FORT DRUM SEQUESTRATION AND CENTCOM CODEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK) for 5 minutes.

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the 10th Mountain Division, their service to Fort Drum, the 21st District of New York, our North Country community, and our Nation.

For 30 years, the brave men and women of the 10th Mountain Division have stood in harm's way to protect and defend our country. Since September 11, 2001, the 10th Mountain Division has been the most actively deployed division to Iraq and Afghani-

stan. Too many of our soldiers have made the ultimate sacrifice and lost their lives in service.

As leaders in Congress, we have an obligation to protect and serve our constituents and members of our Armed Forces. We cannot repay the debt we owe these servicemembers and their families, but we can work to honor their legacy and recognize what they have done for us.

We must protect the promises we have made to these brave individuals and strengthen our Nation's commitment to helping them as they return from combat. In Congress, I will do everything I can to protect the interests of Fort Drum and to ensure the 10th Mountain Division has the necessary resources they need to do their work.

It is critical for Fort Drum and the entire 21st Congressional District to have a voice at the table to fight on behalf of our military families and veterans.

To that end, I am honored to serve on the House Armed Services Committee as the vice chair for the Subcommittee on Readiness and as a member of the Military Personnel Subcommittee and Intelligence, Emerging Threats, and Capabilities Subcommittee.

As a member of these subcommittees, I will work to ensure the Defense Department, our troops, and Fort Drum have the necessary tools they require to defend our Nation from those that wish to do us harm.

However, we continue to see threats to our national security increase, and reductions to our military remain due to the Budget Control Act and sequestration. These substantial budget cuts will have significant negative impacts to Fort Drum and the U.S. military.

Under sequestration, the Pentagon's proposal states that Fort Drum could lose up to 16,000 soldiers and civilian jobs. This loss of jobs will have severe and devastating effects to the installation, the North Country community, New York, and the entire Nation.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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General Dempsey and our military leaders have declared time and time again that sequestration reduces our Armed Forces' readiness and their capabilities, and it unnecessarily puts our men and women in uniform at increased risk.

Here, we expect our servicemen and -women to protect our Nation; however, the imposed budget cuts due to sequestration inhibit their readiness and threaten our national security. It is our duty to ensure our Nation is protected and, in doing so, maintain the operational readiness of our military.

I pledge to work to preserve and strengthen our Nation's Armed Forces and follow in the footsteps of Representative John McHugh by advocating for our troops and veterans stationed in the 21st Congressional District of New York and in our surrounding communities.

Two weeks ago, I had the honor to attend a small congressional delegation visit to Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan. On this trip, I was privileged to meet with soldiers who are based out of Fort Drum, as well as many others who have trained there.

What an opportunity it was to visit with the troops from the Resolute Support headquarters forces, USFOR-A soldiers, and counterterrorism operations forces. I thanked them for their service and discussed ways we can protect and strengthen Fort Drum for our district.

This trip was truly essential in order for me to gain a personal perspective of the circumstances under which so many of our brave soldiers from Fort Drum have served abroad.

Additionally, I was able to meet with many important foreign dignitaries, including King Abdullah of Jordan, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, and Iraqi President Fuad Masum, to discuss issues of concern to the region. These nations and their leaders play a key role in the effort among Arab nations to combat ISIS and other terrorist organizations.

The discussions and meetings with these dignitaries were informative and useful. I believe that continued open dialogue and conversation with these leaders will be incredibly beneficial to maintain and establish our Nation's perspective on defense policy.

This trip gave me a chance to hear from our servicemen and -women on the ground and other national leaders about real solutions related to stabilizing the region, continued threats to our own national security, the readiness of our Armed Forces, and the tools they need to keep our country safe.

Serving the Fort Drum community in Congress and as a member of the House Armed Services Committee is an incredible honor. I am beyond thankful to our men and women in uniform and grateful to their families for their service to our community.

Thank you to you and your loved ones for keeping our Nation safe.

CELEBRATING THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF MRS. ALLIEFAIR ROGERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LOUDERMILK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the milestone in the life of Mrs. Alliefair Rogers who, this week, is celebrating her 100th birthday. Mrs. Rogers is also, incidentally, a second-generation centurion, as her mother, Ida Jane, also lived to the age of 103.

Throughout her life in the past century, Mrs. Rogers has witnessed some of the most significant moments that have shaped our Nation. Born during the onset of World War I, Mrs. Rogers was only 2 years old when America entered the Great War, sending our doughboys across the Atlantic.

By the time she was 5 years old, the first radio stations were going on the air in America, prohibition was enacted, and women for the first time had the right to vote. By her 12th birthday, Charles Lindbergh had flown across the Atlantic Ocean, and the first motion picture with sound was played in theaters. At the age of 14, she witnessed the beginning of the Great Depression.

Just months before turning 25, Mrs. Rogers learned of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and, over the next 5 years, said goodbye to family members and friends as they left Walhalla, South Carolina, to fight against the Axis Powers.

Before her 31st birthday, she had witnessed the D-day invasion, the Battle of the Bulge, the Battle of Iwo Jima, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the surrender of both Germany and Japan. By the age of 33, she witnessed the rebirth of Israel as a nation; and, at 40, America sent troops overseas to fight in Korea.

By her 50th birthday, she had lived through the building of the Berlin Wall, America's first satellite in space, the deployment of forces to Vietnam, the Cuban missile crisis, and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

By 60 years old, Mrs. Rogers witnessed the end of the Vietnam war, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the first human to step foot on the moon.

Within her next 15 years, by the age of 75, Mrs. Rogers experienced the first resignation of a United States President, the invention of the personal computer, the first woman Supreme Court Justice, the end of the cold war, and the beginning of the space shuttle program.

In her lifetime, Mrs. Rogers has witnessed the administration of 17 United States Presidents and a significant portion of this Nation's history.

Today, I join with the many friends and family who are celebrating the virtuous and faith-led life of my aunt Mrs. Alliefair Rogers and wish her a very happy 100th birthday.

ONGOING IRAN NUCLEAR TALKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BYRNE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my serious concerns about the ongoing Iran nuclear talks. Iran is no friend to the United States or our allies. Iran remains the foremost state sponsor of terrorism in the world.

Iran has continued to develop intercontinental ballistic missile technology. The only legitimate purpose of such technology is to deliver a nuclear payload.

Don't just take my word for it. Lieutenant General Vincent Stewart, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, recently wrote in his statement for the record to the House Armed Services Committee:

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to threaten U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East. Iran's actions and policies are designed to further its goal of becoming the dominant regional power, as well as to enhance its strategic depth. Tehran views the United States as its most capable adversary and has fashioned its military strategy and doctrine accordingly.

In terms of nuclear capabilities, General Stewart goes on to say:

We continue to assess that Iran's goal is to develop capabilities that would allow it to build missile-deliverable nuclear weapons, should a decision be made to do so. The regime faces no insurmountable technical barriers to producing a nuclear weapon, making Iran's political will the central issue.

One Arab official recently told *The Wall Street Journal*: "We prefer a collapse of the diplomatic process to a bad deal."

Since they started in 2009, the negotiations with Iran have been marked by missed deadline after missed deadline. It seems like each time details of the deal are leaked to the press, the United States is giving up more, whether it is the number of centrifuges or the length of the deal.

□ 1215

Just last week, Secretary of State John Kerry came before the House Foreign Affairs Committee and pleaded for more time and understanding as the State Department continues to hold talks about Iran's nuclear program. He asked it to sit silently while the details are negotiated in secret. He urged us to just trust him and his team.

Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly hard to trust an administration that continually fails at these kinds of negotiations. Look at the Bergdahl deal when he gave away five high-level al Qaeda officials. Look at the recent talks with Cuba in which the United States received very little while we released Cuban spies and pledged open trade relations. And we can't forget about President Obama telling Russian President Dmitry Medvedev that he will have "more flexibility" to deal with nuclear issues after the 2012 Presidential elections—flexibility to deal with Vladimir Putin. Far too often they give away the bank, and we get very little in return.

Tomorrow, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will come to this Chamber to share his perspective on the threats posed by a nuclear Iran. Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have complained that the speech is somehow out of line or for political purposes only. They have pledged to boycott the event, and the Vice President has refused to attend.

Mr. Speaker, I remain greatly disturbed by the way the Obama administration has treated Israel, our greatest and most important ally in the Middle East. I suspect the real reason the Obama administration is so opposed to Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech is because they are afraid of what he is going to say. They know he will speak the truth and that his statements will stand in direct contrast to what is being said by Secretary of State Kerry. Prime Minister Netanyahu won't hide the real issues. These nuclear talks threaten not only Israel, but also the Middle East and the entire world.

Last summer, I traveled to the Middle East with the Armed Services Committee. During that trip, we met with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and he really impressed me. He has a clear vision and message about his country's defensive needs, and he is very determined to meet those needs.

Mr. Speaker, Israel is our strongest and most consistent ally in the Middle East. We should listen to what they have to say.

THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, today is March 2, 2015. March 2, 1836, marked the beginning of what would become the Republic of Texas. Today on that day, 59 men signed the Declaration of Independence from Mexico and created the Republic of Texas. The events of January through April of 1836 are relatively significant, and I will walk through some of this history.

I stand here today to honor the incredible events of those days and the 179 years of Texas experience that I am proud to be a part of. It is a great honor to be able to have been born in Texas and to claim a part of that incredible legacy.

One of the signature events of the Texas revolution with Mexico, of course, was the battle of the Alamo, which began on February 23, 1836, where Colonel William Barret Travis began to gather men at the Alamo.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a transcription of his letter written to the people of Texas and all Americans on February 24.

TO THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS & ALL AMERICANS IN THE WORLD: Fellow citizens & compatriots—I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna—I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded a surrender

at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken—I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch—The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily & will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country—Victory or Death.

WILLIAM BARRET TRAVIS,
Lt. Col. comdt.

P.S. The Lord is on our side—When the enemy appeared in sight we had not three bushels of corn—We have since found in deserted houses 80 or 90 bushels & got into the walls 20 or 30 head of Beeves.

Travis.

Mr. CONAWAY. Travis and his other fellows stood watch at the Alamo from February 23 until March 6. As they were fighting and looking at their ultimate death, the Declaration of Independence was signed on March 2. Four days later, Santa Anna, with the Mexican Army, overran the Alamo and killed every single one of the defenders there.

There are other events, such as the massacre at Goliad in which Santa Anna ordered the murder and execution of 400-plus Texans who had been a part of that fight. It was cold-blooded, it was ruthless, and it was unnecessary, but Santa Anna chose to take those steps specifically on his order on more than one occasion. And then, culminating on the 21st of April, the Battle of San Jacinto took place, in which Santa Anna and his entire army were surrounded by Texans in a decisive victory in which very few Texans lost their lives. Santa Anna was defeated, and the Texas experience—our independence—was secured with that battle.

Mr. Speaker, I honor today the men and women who stood that ground, that hallowed ground, at the Alamo, at Goliad, San Jacinto, and other battles across Texas. They were stouthearted; they were resolute; they were self-sufficient; they were independent; they loved freedom; they loved independence; and as a result of that, they created Texas, an experience that has now gone on for some 179 years. There were almost 9 of these years in which Texas was the Republic of Texas, becoming a part of the United States in 1846 under that proud Lone Star Flag that we still fly today.

My purpose here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, is to call attention to the Declaration of Independence, and, more importantly, call attention to the faith that the men and women had in freedom and liberty and were willing to put their lives on the line. Many of those lives were lost in the fight for freedom and to create Texas. I am proud to call myself a Texan.

I ask God to continue to bless Texas, and I ask God to continue to bless the United States of America.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 20 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LOUDERMILK) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Dear Lord, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

At the beginning of a new workweek, we use this moment to be reminded of Your presence, and to tap the resources needed by the Members of this people's House to do their work as well as it can be done.

May they be led by Your spirit in the decisions they make. May they possess Your power as they steady themselves amid the pressures of persistent problems.

May their faith in You deliver them from tensions that tear the House apart, and from worries that might wear them out.

All this day, and through the week, may they do their best to find solutions to pressing issues facing our Nation. Please hasten the day when justice and love shall dwell in the hearts of all peoples, and rule the affairs of the nations of Earth.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. KILDEE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE CASS BALLENGER

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, on February 18, the State of North Carolina lost one of its most generous and devoted public servants when former Congressman Cass Ballenger passed away at the age of 88.

Cass served 38 years in public office and was a beloved colleague to many who serve in this Chamber for 18 of those years. He never lost an election, which tells you plenty about the honesty and tenacity with which he lived his life.

In addition to his reputation as a straight-talking legislator who reformed the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, he was known for his extensive humanitarian efforts in Latin America, where he helped build medical clinics, supported orphanages, and delivered medical and relief supplies with his wife, Donna.

Although I never had the opportunity to serve with Cass in Congress, I considered it a great privilege to know this remarkable man and always looked forward to seeing him when our paths crossed in North Carolina. Cass was a man of integrity who said exactly what he thought and fought for what he believed was right. He will be greatly missed.

DHS SHUTDOWN

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, well this week in Congress it is *deja vu* all over again.

Last week, instead of bringing up a clean, long-term funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security, the House again kicked the can down the road. We know that we need to keep open and keep funding the operations of the Department, and we certainly can't make this yet another manufactured political crisis this week.

We know, and everybody in this Hall knows, that there is support in the House, bipartisan support, for a clean Homeland Security bill. I don't know precisely what the numbers are, but more and more we hear from our friends on the Republican side that they would like to see a vote to fully fund DHS for the remainder of the year, and then take up in regular order the process of determining what immigration policy ought to look like in this country.

We have big problems in this Nation. We have big challenges across the globe. We need to focus our attention on getting an economy that works for everyone and not continue to fight battles over manufactured political crises intended to pander to the smallest minds in this body. That is not the way the American people want us to work. We need to get back to the business of the American people.

NATIONAL FFA WEEK

(Mr. NEWHOUSE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, last week we celebrated National FFA Week and the national FFA organization's more than 80 years of commitment to providing students with a path to leadership and career success through agricultural education. This year's theme, "Go All Out," asks more than 600,000 students from over 7,600 local FFA chapters to "go all out for agriculture" and show their communities how they live the FFA motto: Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve.

As a former FFA member, I have always been impressed with how well FFA helps hone certain skills and prepare students for the future. I find that FFA not only helps to advance their knowledge of agriculture and develop community relationships, but you can always tell an FFA student by how articulate and well-spoken they are.

My own experience in FFA not only helped shape my career as a farmer but also prepared me to represent the Fourth District of Washington State.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating the FFA on 80 years of commitment to agriculture and education.

DHS SHUTDOWN

(Mr. VARGAS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the millions of Americans who are concerned about the state of our national security. In today's world, we face many threats from foreign enemies who intend to do us harm. Americans expect that Congress will fulfill its duty to act in the best interests of those we serve. The question of whether or not to fund the Department of Homeland Security should never even be up for debate. I respect the difference of opinions some of my colleagues hold with respect to the President's recent executive action on immigration. But taking hostage a funding bill that is intended to keep American families safe in order to get what you want is reckless, and it is not the way this body was intended to function.

Let's pass a clean DHS funding bill, and then let's have a serious debate on immigration. We need to find a comprehensive solution to our immigration challenges, and the only way to do that is by working together to pass a bipartisan bill. Let's utilize this Chamber to debate and pass meaningful legislation, and let's start right now by approving the Department of Homeland Security funding for the remainder of the fiscal year.

HONORING THE LIFE OF KENNETH LEHR

(Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of a man who was dedicated to protecting and serving the public. Kenneth Lehr, the fire chief for the village of Medora in Macoupin County, Illinois, died in the line of duty earlier this month.

Chief Lehr was entering his 21st year as a member of the Medora Fire Department and had served as fire chief since 2006.

While preparing to respond to a 911 call on February 5, Chief Lehr was struck by a firetruck that was heading to the scene. This tragic event reminds us all to never forget the selflessness and sacrifices our first responders make on our behalf, especially when many give their lives for our safety.

Earlier this month, more than 500 first responders, family, and friends packed the gymnasium at Southwestern High School in Piasa, Illinois, to pay their respects to Chief Lehr. Some firefighters traveled more than 2 hours to honor Chief Lehr.

Friends and coworkers of Chief Lehr noted his unwavering willingness to help others, both as fire chief and as a member of the Medora community. Chief Lehr is survived by his wife, one son, and three grandsons. My thoughts and this House's thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends, and the Medora community as they continue to mourn.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 4 of rule I, the following enrolled bill was signed by the Speaker on Friday, February 27, 2015:

H.R. 33, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 5 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 10 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1702

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BYRNE) at 5 o'clock and 2 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules

on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

AUTHORIZING SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO RECOUP BONUSES AND AWARDS

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 280) to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to recoup bonuses and awards paid to employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 280

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. AUTHORITY TO RECOUP BONUSES OR AWARDS PAID TO EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 715. Recoupment of bonuses or awards paid to employees of Department

“(a) RECOUPMENT.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary may issue an order directing an employee of the Department to repay the amount, or a portion of the amount, of any award or bonus paid to the employee under title 5, including under chapters 45 or 53 of such title, or this title if—

“(1) the Secretary determines such repayment appropriate pursuant to regulations prescribed under subsection (c); and

“(2) before such repayment, the employee is afforded notice and an opportunity for a hearing conducted by another department or agency of the Federal Government.

“(b) REVIEW.—A decision regarding a repayment by an employee pursuant to subsection (a)(2) is final and may not be reviewed by any department or agency or any court.

“(c) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall prescribe regulations to carry out this section.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is further amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“715. Recoupment of bonuses or awards paid to employees of Department.”

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 715 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to an award or bonus paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs before, on, or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act or the amendments made by this Act may be construed to modify the certification issued by the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget regarding the performance appraisal system of the Senior Executive Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 280, as amended, is similar to a bill that I introduced last

Congress. I would like to thank my friend Mr. CHAFFETZ for helping us bring this bill to the floor today. It would authorize and provide for the Secretary to have the authority to rescind a bonus or a performance award from VA employees when the Secretary deems it appropriate. To ensure a fair process, the provision would also give the employee an opportunity to hold a hearing on the Secretary's decision to recoup that bonus.

Now, I proposed this legislation last Congress because VA had given the Committee on Veterans' Affairs conflicting statements whether or not they had the authority, and later they confirmed that they did not have that authority. So it is clear to me that this is still an authority that the Secretary still needs as more and more investigations, in fact, are being completed by the Department, the VA inspector general, and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

As these investigations into falsified wait times, data manipulation, and several other issues at the VA continue, I hope this authority will be applied appropriately and that it will be utilized as yet another tool for the Secretary to use to instill true accountability throughout his agency on behalf of America's veterans.

I reserve the balance of my time.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,

Washington, DC, February 26, 2015.

Hon. JEFF MILLER,
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I write concerning H.R. 280, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to recoup bonuses and awards paid to employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs. As you know, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs received an original referral and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform a secondary referral when the bill was introduced on January 12, 2015. I recognize and appreciate your desire to bring this legislation before the House of Representatives in an expeditious manner, and accordingly, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform will forego action on the bill.

The Committee takes this action with our mutual understanding that by foregoing consideration of H.R. 280 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in this or similar legislation. Further, I request your support for the appointment of conferees from the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform during any House-Senate conference convened on this or related legislation.

Finally, I would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the bill report filed by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, as well as in the Congressional Record during floor consideration, to memorialize our understanding.

Sincerely,

JASON CHAFFETZ,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, February 27, 2015.
Hon. JASON CHAFFETZ,
Chairman, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN CHAFFETZ: In reference to your letter on February 26, 2015, I write to confirm our mutual understanding regarding H.R. 280, as amended, “To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to recoup bonuses and awards paid to employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs.”

I appreciate the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform's waiver of consideration of provisions under its jurisdiction and its subject matter as specified in your letter. I acknowledge that the waiver was granted only to expedite floor consideration of H.R. 280, as amended, and does not in any way waive or diminish the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform's jurisdictional interests over this legislation or similar legislation. I will support a request from the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform for appointment to any House-Senate conference on H.R. 280, as amended.

Again, thank you for your assistance with these matters.

With warm personal regards, I am

Sincerely,

JEFF MILLER,
Chairman.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 280, as amended. This measure would provide the Secretary of Veterans Affairs with the authority to issue an order directing an employee of the VA to repay a bonus or a portion of the bonus provided to that employee. H.R. 280 provides the Secretary may do this if the Secretary determines that the repayment is appropriate. This authority would apply to an award or a bonus paid by the VA before, on, or after the date of the enactment of H.R. 280. The bill provides that any affected employee be provided with notice and the opportunity for a hearing conducted by another agency or department.

I support this measure, but I want to take this opportunity to address a few concerns for the RECORD.

I believe that the Secretary should have a limited authority, beyond administrative error, to recoup a bonus paid to the VA employee when the underlying basis of that bonus is false or the result of wrongdoing, fraud, or criminal conduct by the employee. I hope that the Secretary will use this broad grant of rulemaking authority provided in H.R. 280 to provide narrow and specific grounds for recoupment.

Secondly, I am concerned about the application of this authority to bonuses provided before the date of the enactment. I know that Chairman MILLER and all of us are concerned over bonuses that may have been awarded over the last number of years to VA managers who took activities, steps to cover up the delay and wait time faced by our veterans. Even though I am unhappy with their action, I would not like to see the authority provided to the Secretary under the bill to be done away with because of a constitutional challenge to this authority.

Finally, I would like to point out that if this bill is enacted, the VA will be the only Department that I am aware of where the Secretary will have the power to recoup bonuses. I hope the Secretary and those that follow this Secretary will use this authority with caution.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 280, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from the First District of Michigan (Mr. BENISHEK), the subcommittee chairman of the Subcommittee on Health.

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 280, legislation to allow the VA Secretary to claw back bonuses from senior employees who were found to have manipulated veterans' care data.

Frankly, I can't believe that this wasn't already the case. No business in America would allow employees to not only stay at work, but to hold on to bonuses that they earned by cooking the books. This is exactly what the VA has done. The VA has paid more than \$380,000 in 2013 to directors and top executives at VA hospitals that were under investigation for falsifying data.

I am the father of a veteran. I know exactly the character of those who choose to serve the cause of freedom. They deserve so much better. Bonuses should be awarded only for exceptional performance. This kind of severe mismanagement has to end. I know I speak for all my colleagues when I say it will not be tolerated by this Congress.

Secretary McDonald says he is working to change the culture of the VA, and I give him credit for that. Too often the VA seems to be focusing on the health of the organization, not the health of the veteran. I agree with him that the VA must return the focus to the veteran. However, I would like to see more meaningful strides toward accountability than I have seen thus far. Congress will keep giving him the tools, but it is ultimately up to him to use them. This is a management problem, and it is best solved by good management.

I thank Chairman MILLER for his leadership on this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it, but even more so, I urge Secretary McDonald to use this authority. You have a willing partner in Congress in the fight to change the culture at the VA.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida has yielded back the balance of her time. The gentleman from Florida is recognized.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have two more speakers at this point. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from the Sixth District of Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN), who chairs the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Mr. COFFMAN. I thank the chairman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 280 because, like most Americans, I am appalled at the bonuses awarded to officials within the Department of Veterans Affairs despite gross mismanagement and incompetence by those very same officials.

In my home State of Colorado, a VA director conveniently announced her retirement just days after yet another secret waiting list was discovered at her hospital in Denver. Incredibly, she had received over \$100,000 in bonuses over the past 7 years.

I believe bonuses are a reward for exceptional work and not an entitlement for simply showing up at the job. However, the VA's broadly abused bonus system has spread a sense of entitlement and a complete lack of accountability.

This law gives the VA Secretary the ability to reclaim bonuses paid to corrupt VA officials. On behalf of the American taxpayer, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense measure to help combat VA's broken culture.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from the Sixth District of Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO), a new member of the committee, an outstanding supporter of America's veterans.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, bringing more accountability and transparency to our Veterans Affairs system is something Members of both parties can and should support. As a member of the Committee on Veterans Affairs, I believe this is an area where we can make immediate and substantive reforms that are supported by both parties.

After months of being in the spotlight for scandal after scandal, after widespread and systemic lack of accountability, we all agree that we need real change in an effort to assist our Nation's veterans. H.R. 280 is one such piece of legislation that will help bring accountability to a Department where it is severely lacking.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a cosponsor of this legislation that will authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to recoup bonuses and awards paid to employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA paid more than \$380,000 in cash bonuses to top executives at 38 hospitals that are under investigation for falsifying wait times for medical care.

At every twist and turn, these executives received a bonus, while so many of our veterans have been faced with long wait periods or failed care at VA hospitals around the country. It is disgraceful that employees would be benefiting while so many veterans are struggling.

It is only right that we would authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to recoup many of these bonuses and awards in an effort to instill more accountability at the Department. In fact, it is common sense. If you receive a bonus under false pretenses, you should have to pay it back.

I, along with so many other Americans, am asking the question, Where is the accountability? H.R. 280 will not only ensure our veterans receive the care they deserve and have earned, but it also promotes transparency and accountability where it is greatly needed.

I want to thank Chairman MILLER for his leadership and his work on this important issue.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague from Florida and her support, and at this point I urge all Members to support H.R. 280, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 280, a bill which authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to recoup bonuses paid to VA executives who knowingly falsified data on the treatment of our nation's veterans.

Last year, it was discovered that a VA hospital in Phoenix, Arizona falsified waitlist records for veterans to see a doctor in order to make it appear that the facility was meeting waitlist goals.

This deliberate, and deplorable, action allowed VA executives to receive performance bonuses and awards, while veterans waited up to six months to a year for care, and it was reported that some died as a result.

To date, the VA has paid more than \$380,000 in cash bonuses to top executives at 38 hospitals that are under investigation for falsifying wait times for medical care.

In response to the waitlist scandal, many members of Congress on both sides of the aisle have called for the VA to take action to recover bonuses paid to VA officials who falsified waitlist records.

However, the VA has said it is uncertain whether it has that authority.

This bill directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to require VA employees to repay, in part or in full, bonuses or performance awards in appropriate circumstances under regulations to be established by the department.

This authority would apply to bonuses or rewards paid on or after the date of enactment and would not authorize the VA to recover previously paid bonuses.

Furthermore, under the bill, VA employees would receive notification and be given a hearing at which they could contest allegations about their performance.

The measure requires that an appeal decision would be final and not reviewable by any other agency or court.

Our nation supports more than 2 million troops and reservists, their families, and 22 million veterans, including 32,477 in the 18th Congressional District of Texas.

We have a responsibility to ensure that they will be provided the quality job opportunities they have earned.

I cannot, in good conscience, allow VA executives who knowingly falsified data which kept our nation's veterans from receiving proper care, to keep bonuses that they do not deserve.

This money should be used to help those who have risked their lives to protect our freedom, not for awarding VA executives who shamefully put these veterans' health at risk. I ask my fellow Members to support H.R. 280.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 280, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

□ 1715

LONG-TERM CARE VETERANS CHOICE ACT

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 294) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts and agreements for the transfer of veterans to non-Department medical foster homes for certain veterans who are unable to live independently, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 294

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act”.

SEC. 2. SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CONTRACT AUTHORITY FOR PLACEMENT OF VETERANS IN NON-DEPARTMENT MEDICAL FOSTER HOMES.

(a) AUTHORITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 1720 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h)(1) During the three-year period beginning on October 1, 2015, and subject to paragraph (2), at the request of a veteran for whom the Secretary is required to provide nursing home care under section 1710A of this title, the Secretary may place the veteran in a medical foster home that meets Department standards, at the expense of the United States, pursuant to a contract or agreement entered into between the Secretary and the medical foster home for such purpose. A veteran who is placed in a medical foster home under this subsection shall agree, as a condition of such placement, to accept home health services furnished by the Secretary under section 1717 of this title.

“(2) Not more than 900 veterans placed in a medical foster home, whether placed before or after the enactment of the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act, may have their care covered at the expense of the United States under subsection (a).

“(3) In this subsection, the term ‘medical foster home’ means a home designed to provide non-institutional, long-term, supportive care for veterans who are unable to live independently and prefer a family setting.”.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (h) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on October 1, 2015.

(b) LIMITATIONS ON AWARDS AND BONUSES.—Section 705 of the Veterans Access, Choice,

and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146; 38 U.S.C. 703 note) is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 705. LIMITATION ON AWARDS AND BONUSES PAID TO EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

“The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that the aggregate amount of awards and bonuses paid by the Secretary in a fiscal year under chapter 45 or 53 of title 5, United States Code, or any other awards or bonuses authorized under such title or title 38, United States Code, does not exceed the following amounts:

“(1) With respect to each of fiscal years 2015 through 2018, \$300,000,000.

“(2) With respect to each of fiscal years 2019 through 2024, \$360,000,000.”.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts and agreements for the placement of veterans in non-Department medical foster homes for certain veterans who are unable to live independently.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentleman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 294, as amended, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act, would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs for 3 years, beginning October 1 of 2015, to enter into a contract or agreement with a certified medical foster home to pay for long-term care for not more than 900 eligible veterans.

An eligible veteran is defined as one who is eligible for VA-paid nursing home care and would agree to receive VA home health services. The bill would also limit the amount of awards and bonuses paid to VA employees at \$300 million for each of fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

Medical foster home care is a non-institutional, long-term care alternative for those who prefer a smaller, more homelike, and familial care setting than many traditional nursing homes are able to provide.

VA has been helping to place veterans in medical foster homes for over a decade and providing the oversight and the safeguards needed to ensure that veterans receive safe, high-quality care.

According to VA, over 900 veterans currently receive medical foster home care. However, VA does not currently have the authority to pay for the cost of medical foster home care, regardless of whether or not the veteran who chooses medical foster home care is eligible for more costly VA-paid nursing home care.

This creates a situation, Mr. Speaker, where many service-connected veterans are limited with their financial resources and are unable to access the medical foster home care that they desire because of limited financial resources; instead, these veterans often move into nursing homes at a much greater expense to VA.

With the creation of the choice program last August, Congress, on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis, agreed that our veterans deserve the right to choose for themselves where and how they receive health care that they have earned.

With today's passage of H.R. 294, as amended, we will reaffirm that right to choose for the growing population of veterans in need of long-term care services.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 294, as amended.

Providing high-quality health care to our Nation's veterans has always been a number one priority for this committee. Ensuring that the VA is a leader in the provision of long-term care to our veterans has also been a priority.

We must work to make sure that VA provides a full range of long-term care programs, and H.R. 294, as amended, is a valuable improvement in providing veterans the choice of obtaining long-term care in a medical foster home.

H.R. 294 gives VA the authority to pay for veterans' long-term care in VA-approved medical foster homes. These homes provide care in a private home at much lower cost than nursing home care. Medical foster homes are safe, and we know through experience that many veterans prefer them to the traditional nursing home.

Older veterans also indicated that they prefer to receive care closer to home. The Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act would provide the opportunity for more veterans to take advantage of this home care setting.

I fully support this legislation and thank the chairman for introducing it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers at this time, so I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 294, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 294, as amended.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on both H.R. 280, as amended, and H.R. 294, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 203, the “Long-Term Care Veteran Choice Act”, which will help expand access to healthcare for our nation's veterans.

In 2014, it was found that some VA Department employees were responsible for deliberately falsifying wait-time records for veteran's medical appointments in order to create the appearance of reaching wait-time targets.

This falsification of records even resulted in the unfortunate death of several veterans who were forced to wait unreasonably long periods of time before receiving the healthcare they unquestionably earned.

H.R. 294 is intended to prevent another unacceptable incident and to ensure our veterans receive the healthcare they deserve.

H.R. 294 allows veterans to obtain health care at non-VA health care facilities if they live more than 40 miles from a VA clinic or cannot be scheduled for an appointment at a VA clinic within 30 days.

Further, the bill increases the VA's capacity to provide health care services by providing expedited authority to hire more doctors and nurses and by providing for leases for the opening of 27 additional VA health facilities across the nation.

This bill will also propose a three year pilot program which will transfer certain veterans to non-department medical foster homes if they are unable to live independently at the cost of the VA.

It is our duty to make available only the best health care to our veterans, and I cite as an example the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston.

The DeBakey VA Medical Center provides world-class services to almost 130,000 veterans in southeast Texas and employs over 4,000 health care professionals.

The DeBakey VA Medical Center has earned prestigious awards and accreditations for the quality of care provided, including:

Accreditation from Joint Commission for hospital, long-term care, behavioral health care, home care, and substance abuse;

Re-designation for Magnet Recognition for Excellence in Nursing Services by the American Nurses Credentialing Center;

Gold Seal of Approval in 2011 from the Joint Commission as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center; and

Specialty accreditation by the American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation for its Clinical Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Program.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans have given this country so much and we owe it to them and to ourselves that they have the best and most accessible health care services.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 294, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair

declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 23 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1830

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BYRNE) at 6 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on motions to suspend the rules previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

H.R. 294, by the yeas and nays;

H.R. 280, de novo.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Any remaining electronic vote will be conducted as a 5-minute vote.

LONG-TERM CARE VETERANS CHOICE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 294) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts and agreements for the transfer of veterans to non-Department medical foster homes for certain veterans who are unable to live independently, as amended, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 405, nays 0, not voting 27, as follows:

[Roll No. 107]

YEAS—405

Abraham	Bost	Carter (TX)
Adams	Boustany	Cartwright
Aderholt	Boyle, Brendan	Castro (TX)
Aguilar	F.	Chabot
Allen	Brady (PA)	Chaffetz
Amash	Brady (TX)	Chu, Judy
Amodei	Brat	Cicilline
Ashford	Bridenstine	Clark (MA)
Babin	Brooks (AL)	Clarke (NY)
Barletta	Brooks (IN)	Clawson (FL)
Barr	Brown (FL)	Clay
Barton	Brownley (CA)	Cleaver
Beatty	Buchanan	Clyburn
Becerra	Buck	Coffman
Benish	Bucshon	Cohen
Bera	Burgess	Cole
Beyer	Bustos	Collins (GA)
Bilirakis	Butterfield	Collins (NY)
Bishop (GA)	Byrne	Comstock
Bishop (MI)	Calvert	Conaway
Bishop (UT)	Capps	Connolly
Black	Capuano	Cook
Blackburn	Cardenas	Cooper
Blum	Carney	Costa
Blumenauer	Carson (IN)	Costello (PA)
Bonamici	Carter (GA)	Courtney

Cramer	Jackson Lee	Nunes
Crowley	Jeffries	O'Rourke
Cuellar	Jenkins (KS)	Olson
Culberson	Jenkins (WV)	Pallazzo
Cummings	Johnson (GA)	Pallone
Curbelo (FL)	Johnson (OH)	Palmer
Davis (CA)	Johnson, E. B.	Pascarell
Davis, Danny	Johnson, Sam	Paulsen
Davis, Rodney	Jolly	Payne
DeFazio	Jones	Pearce
DeGette	Jordan	Pelosi
Delaney	Joyce	Perlmutter
DeLauro	Kaptur	Perry
DelBene	Katko	Peters
Denham	Keating	Peterson
Dent	Kelly (IL)	Pingree
DeSantis	Kelly (PA)	Pittenger
DeSaulnier	Kennedy	Pitts
DesJarlais	Kildee	Pocan
Deutch	Kilmer	Poe (TX)
Diaz-Balart	Kind	Poliquin
Dingell	King (IA)	Polis
Doggett	King (NY)	Pompeo
Dold	Kinziger (IL)	Posey
Doyle, Michael	Kirkpatrick	Price (NC)
F.	Kline	Price, Tom
Duckworth	Kuster	Quigley
Duffy	Labrador	Rangel
Duncan (SC)	LaMalfa	Ratcliffe
Duncan (TN)	Lamborn	Reed
Edwards	Lance	Reichert
Ellison	Langevin	Renacci
Ellmers (NC)	Larsen (WA)	Ribble
Emmer (MN)	Larson (CT)	Rice (NY)
Eshoo	Latta	Rice (SC)
Esty	Lawrence	Rigell
Farenthold	Lee	Roby
Farr	Levin	Rogers (AL)
Fattah	Lewis	Rogers (KY)
Fitzpatrick	Lieu, Ted	Rokita
Fleischmann	Lipinski	Rooney (FL)
Fleming	LoBiondo	Ros-Lehtinen
Forbes	Loebuck	Roskam
Fortenberry	Loftgren	Ross
Foster	Loudermilk	Rothfus
Fox	Love	Rouzer
Frankel (FL)	Lowenthal	Roybal-Allard
Franks (AZ)	Lowe	Royce
Frelinghuysen	Lucas	Ruiz
Fudge	Luetkemeyer	Ruppersberger
Gabbard	Lujan Grisham	Russell
Gallo	(NM)	Ryan (OH)
Garamendi	Lujan, Ben Ray	Ryan (WI)
Garrett	(NM)	Salmon
Gibbs	Lummis	Sánchez, Linda
Gibson	Lynch	T.
Gohmert	MacArthur	Sanford
Goodlatte	Maloney,	Sarbanes
Gosar	Carolyn	Scalise
Gowdy	Maloney, Sean	Schakowsky
Graham	Marchant	Schiff
Granger	Marino	Schock
Graves (GA)	Massie	Schrader
Graves (LA)	Matsui	Schweikert
Graves (MO)	McCarthy	Scott (VA)
Grayson	McCaul	Scott, Austin
Green, Al	McClintock	Scott, David
Green, Gene	McCollum	Sensenbrenner
Griffith	McDermott	Serrano
Grijalva	McGovern	Sessions
Grothman	McHenry	Sewell (AL)
Guinta	McKinley	Sherman
Guthrie	McMorris	Shimkus
Hahn	Rodgers	Shuster
Hanna	McNerney	Simpson
Hardy	McSally	Sinema
Harper	Meadows	Sires
Harris	Meehan	Slaughter
Hastings	Meng	Smith (MO)
Heck (NV)	Messer	Smith (NE)
Heck (WA)	Mica	Smith (NJ)
Hensarling	Miller (FL)	Smith (TX)
Herrera Beutler	Miller (MI)	Smith (WA)
Hice, Jody B.	Moolenaar	Stefanik
Higgins	Mooney (WV)	Stewart
Hill	Moore	Stivers
Himes	Moulton	Swalwell (CA)
Holding	Mullin	Takai
Honda	Mulvaney	Takano
Hoyer	Murphy (FL)	Thompson (CA)
Hudson	Murphy (PA)	Thompson (MS)
Huelskamp	Napolitano	Thompson (PA)
Huffman	Neal	Thornberry
Huizenga (MI)	Neugebauer	Tiberi
Hunter	Newhouse	Tipton
Hurd (TX)	Noem	Titus
Hurt (VA)	Nolan	Torres
Israel	Norcross	Trott
Issa	Nugent	Tsongas

Turner	Walters, Mimi	Wilson (SC)
Upton	Walz	Wittman
Van Hollen	Wasserman	Womack
Vargas	Schultz	Woodall
Veasey	Watson Coleman	Yarmuth
Vela	Weber (TX)	Yoder
Velázquez	Webster (FL)	Yoho
Visclosky	Welch	Young (AK)
Wagner	Wenstrup	Young (IA)
Walberg	Westerman	Young (IN)
Walden	Westmoreland	Zeldin
Walker	Whitfield	Zinke
Walorski	Williams	

NOT VOTING—27

Bass	Hartzler	Rohrabacher
Castor (FL)	Hinojosa	Rush
Conyers	Hultgren	Sanchez, Loretta
Crawford	Knight	Speier
Crenshaw	Long	Stutzman
Engel	Meeks	Tonko
Fincher	Nadler	Valadao
Flores	Richmond	Waters, Maxine
Gutiérrez	Roe (TN)	Wilson (FL)

□ 1856

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The title was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts and agreements for the placement of veterans in non-Department medical foster homes for certain veterans who are unable to live independently."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 107, had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

AUTHORIZING SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO RECOUP BONUSES AND AWARDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and passing the bill (H.R. 280) to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to recoup bonuses and awards paid to employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Miller) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HOOR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 10 a.m. tomorrow.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO PRESIDENT'S EXPORT COUNCIL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to Executive Order 12131, and the order of the House of January 6, 2015, of the following Members on the part of the House to the President's Export Council:

Mr. KILDEE, Michigan
Ms. DELBENE, Washington

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to section 2 of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715a), and the order of the House of January 6, 2015, of the following Member on the part of the House to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission:

Mr. THOMPSON, California

□ 1900

FCC DECISION

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, last week, the FCC voted 3-2 on bipartisan lines to allow unprecedented government regulation of the Internet and reversing nearly two decades of bipartisan policy.

In a recent interview, FCC Commissioner Ajit Pai said, "This is a solution that won't work to a problem that doesn't exist." Mr. Speaker, the FCC Commissioner is exactly right. Why are trying to fix a problem that simply does not exist?

This decision by the FCC represents a dangerous and reckless disregard for free market principles and is just another example of government overreach by this administration.

Mr. Speaker, President Obama's 332-page plan to regulate the Internet will lead to slower services, less investment, and more taxation.

Together with my colleagues, I will continue to fight to keep a free and open Internet.

WELCOMING PRIME MINISTER BINYAMIN NETANYAHU

(Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the special friendship between the United States and Israel and to welcome Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu before his address on the challenges facing our two nations.

In their campaign of unparalleled savagery, the radical Islamic terrorists

known as ISIS have made the slaughter of innocent Christians a priority. In the face of this senseless violence, Israel stands as a beacon of safety. To end this barbarism, the United States, Israel, and all our allies should develop a long-term strategy to wipe ISIS off the Earth.

The United States and Israel are also confronted with the potential emergence of a nuclear Iran. Like Israel, our government should keep all options on the table to prevent this outcome.

In facing these and future challenges, our Nation is fortunate to call Israel a friend. Israel and the United States share common ideals of freedom, justice, and fair elections by the people in a republic.

I welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu back to Congress, and I look forward to his remarks on protecting our shared values against terrorism and a nuclear Iran.

THE LONE STAR STATE OF THE MIDDLE EAST

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the nation of Israel is surrounded by some mean, aggressive neighbors that want Israel destroyed. The leader of the pack of jackals is Iran. The Supreme Leader of Iran has made it clear he wants the Jewish state to vanish into the sands of time.

Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel will be here tomorrow to speak to Congress on the serious plight that Israel faces from our mutual enemy, Iran. The White House is snubbing the head of state because Congress supposedly violated protocol with the invite.

Meanwhile, the White House is blissfully working on a backroom deal with Iran regarding their nuclear weapon program, a deal that will end up to be good for Iran, with a short pause in work on its nuclear enrichment.

Mr. Speaker, Israel is the lone star state in the Middle East for freedom. So on this Texas Independence Day and on behalf of the people of the State of Texas, the Lone Star State, I want to welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu to speak candidly and openly about the true threat from the jackal of the desert, Iran.

And that is just the way it is.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO MY HOME, THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

(Mr. OLSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, 179 years ago, a document from home changed the world with 102 final words. These words are:

We, therefore, the delegates with plenary powers of the people of Texas, in solemn convention assembled, appealing to a candid

world for the necessities of our condition, do hereby resolve and declare that our political connection with the Mexican nation has forever ended and that the people of Texas do now constitute a free, sovereign, and independent republic and are fully invested with all the rights and attributes which properly belong to independent nations; and, conscious of the rectitude of our intentions, we fearlessly and confidently commit the issue to the decision of the Supreme arbiter of the destinies of nations.

Happy birthday to my home, the Republic of Texas.

WELCOMING PRIME MINISTER BINYAMIN NETANYAHU

(Mr. PALAZZO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALAZZO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome our friend and ally Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to the United States of America.

Tomorrow, the Prime Minister will address this Chamber as a head of state. Some are protesting and will not attend. This is shortsighted and, frankly, disheartening. We have no greater ally in the Middle East than Israel, and Israel's very existence is being threatened by its neighbors in the region.

Words like "total destruction" are being thrown around by its enemies. Iran marches towards a nuclear bomb; yet we do nothing, we say nothing. Sure, we negotiate, but we don't lead.

Mr. Speaker, the President needs to step forward and lead, tell the world that we will do what it takes to protect our Israeli friends, as we have done for over 70 years.

Prime Minister Netanyahu, welcome to the United States. I look forward to your remarks tomorrow and to our nations' continued friendship, as do the majority of Americans.

WELCOMING PRIME MINISTER BINYAMIN NETANYAHU

(Mr. GOHMERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, following my friend from Mississippi, it is important that we recognize that it is not just a person coming tomorrow to speak to us, it is the leader of Israel, our best friend in the Middle East.

You think I like to come here and get lectured about the Citizens United case by a guy that doesn't understand that case? You think I enjoy coming over here and being told, You pass my American Jobs Act right now, when he didn't even have one for a couple of weeks?

Of course not—I come and listen to the President because of the respect for the position. This is a dangerous precedent some are thinking about starting tomorrow: Well, I am just not going to show up because I don't like the man that is leading Israel.

They are our ally, and if you want people to stop showing up for others

like the President, then start that tradition.

It is a wrong move. Let's pay respect to our best friend's leader in the Middle East.

GOD BLESS TEXAS

(Mr. BARTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTON. Mr. Speaker, 179 years ago, in a hamlet in what is now Grimes County, Texas, called Washington-on-the-Brazos, a handful of brave Texans voted to declare independence from Mexico. We call this day Texas Independence Day.

As those brave men were declaring their independence at a decrepit old mission in San Antonio, Texas, less than 200 patriots—led by people like Davy Crockett and William Barret Travis and James Bowie—were fending off an army of somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 Mexican soldiers under the leadership of a General Santa Ana.

The Alamo fell on March 6, but on April 21, 1836, General Sam Houston, at a bayou called San Jacinto, led about 350 Texans in a surprise attack on the Mexican Army and won independence for Texas from Mexico.

God bless Texas, and God bless all those patriots 179 years ago for what they did.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: OBSERVATIONS ON RACE AND JUSTICE IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARTER of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, this evening, the Congressional Black Caucus will take a moment to discuss our strong support for the confirmation of U.S. Attorney Loretta Lynch as the next Attorney General of the United States, and we will examine the larger issue of justice in America.

Tonight's CBC hour is entitled "Bridging the Divide: Observations on Race and Justice in America." As we reflect on the 50th anniversary of the Selma marches, the events of Bloody Sunday, and the progress that has been achieved in the years since, we must remember that the Voting Rights Act was achieved not only because of those who marched, it succeeded because of those who cared enough to get involved, a Congress that became engaged, and an active Department of Justice that was diligent about enforcing the Voting Rights Act.

Loretta Lynch is exactly the type of active, educated, and principled character we need as our next Attorney General. Last week, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to confirm her as the next AG, paving the way for her

confirmation by the full Senate. This confirmation must come soon and cannot be held up for partisan political purposes.

With experience as a frontline prosecutor, a U.S. attorney, and as someone with a strong record of service over several decades, Ms. Lynch is more than qualified to sit at the helm of the Department of Justice and protect the rights of our American democracy.

On the issue of justice, there is so much more we can discuss tonight, but right now, it is most appropriate for us to examine a few topics that so many citizens in the districts we represent want to look at.

In addition to Ms. Lynch and the Department of Justice, we would like to take time to explore the value of black lives in America and the fact that they do really matter, perceptions in minority communities regarding police treatment, the impact of black incarceration on communities, and voting rights and disenfranchisement.

I want to thank the distinguished gentleman from the Garden State, my good friend and anchor for this hour of action, Representative DONALD PAYNE. Congressman PAYNE has been a forceful advocate for justice issues in America and a leader in the true sense of the word.

I yield to Congressman PAYNE.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlelady from Illinois who has demonstrated her leadership throughout her time here in Congress, and I am just delighted to also be working with her.

Mr. Speaker, we want to thank the Congresswoman, once again, for opening tonight's Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour. It is an honor to join with her and the other members of this caucus to speak directly to the American people and keep them up to date on our efforts.

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We are here tonight to talk about the urgent need to ensure the nomination of Loretta Lynch as the next Attorney General of the United States of America.

Ms. Lynch has a distinguished legal career in private and public service, earning the respect of her colleagues and establishing herself as a topnotch lawyer and Federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York.

She has successfully prosecuted cases on far-ranging issues, including public corruption, violent crime, and terrorism. They have included a number of high-profile cases, such as *United States v. Volpe*. In that case, Ms. Lynch was part of the trial team that convicted several New York police officers involved in the torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima in 1997. She also prosecuted the Bangladeshi man convicted of attempting to blow up the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Lynch's professional credentials are matched by her

strength of character. Throughout her career, Ms. Lynch has demonstrated unparalleled strength of character, integrity, and independence. She has displayed an unwavering commitment to the rule of law, to public service, and to this Nation. She has proven time and time again that she is a highly capable, independent leader who carefully considers all sides of an issue and does not cave to outside influences.

These are the characteristics we look for, characteristics we should and do demand when considering nominees for U.S. Attorney General.

Ms. Lynch's professional background and outstanding character suggest she would be capable of using her position to address a number of issues that are important to achieving true equality and justice for African American communities. These include perceptions of police treatment, voting rights, and sentencing disparities, which undermine the foundations of African American communities.

There is every indication that Ms. Lynch would make an outstanding U.S. Attorney General, and it is the hope of this caucus that she can quickly be confirmed by the Senate.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD), the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Ms. KELLY for her leadership and for yielding me this time as a representative of the 46 men and women comprising the Congressional Black Caucus.

Mr. PAYNE, I want to thank you for all you do for our caucus and what you mean to not only the State of New Jersey, but also what you mean to all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we have set aside this hour to remark about the confirmation process for Loretta Lynch. President Obama should be commended for choosing an Attorney General nominee who is well qualified in every respect. Though she lives in New York City, she is a native of Greensboro and Durham, North Carolina. She is a North Carolinian for sure.

Her father, the Reverend Leonzo Lynch, whom I have known for most of my life, is a native of Martin County, North Carolina, from the town of Oak City, which is right in the heart of my congressional district. The Lynch family has deep roots in eastern North Carolina.

Ms. Lynch has a 30-year career, distinguished legal career. She is a well-

respected lawyer and Federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York, which serves 8 million people throughout Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and Long Island. Loretta Lynch is consistently recognized among her peers as a tough, fair and independent lawyer who has twice headed one of the most active and effective U.S. Attorney's Offices in the country.

Ms. Lynch has a proven record of prosecuting hate crimes and cracking down on public corruption without regard to political party or affiliation. She has a reputation for being committed to protecting human rights and ensuring equal opportunity for all Americans. Ms. Lynch possesses high moral character and integrity. She has the perfect set of professional credentials to lead the U.S. Department of Justice.

She remains steadfast and unflappable when facing the court of public opinion and upholds the letter of the law in all circumstances, even when it is unpopular.

Throughout Ms. Lynch's confirmation process, Senators in both parties have lauded her qualifications and her sterling career. However, Ms. Lynch has waited longer for a confirmation vote than any U.S. Attorney General in modern history. Her nomination has been pending for more than 100 days. The politics that Republicans have played with Ms. Lynch's nomination are deplorable, and opposition to her nomination is nothing more than, in my opinion, a political ploy to once again use any means necessary to show their disdain for the President.

I am deeply disappointed, as I am sure many other North Carolinians are, at Senator THOM TILLIS' vote last week in the Senate Judiciary Committee against the nomination of one of North Carolina's own. Senator TILLIS had an opportunity to be on the right side of history in supporting her nomination, but he did not.

If confirmed, Ms. Lynch would make history as the first African American woman to serve in the role as United States Attorney General. She is an outstanding nominee and an excellent choice. The Senate should move swiftly to confirm Loretta Lynch as Attorney General for the United States of America.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Congressman BUTTERFIELD's remarks.

It is now my pleasure to yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE), past chairperson of the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressperson extraordinaire.

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend for yielding. I want to thank my colleagues, PAYNE and KELLY, for leading the Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour. You are our message team. You are the people who let all of the world, all of America know what the CBC is dealing with on a daily basis, and I thank you for your work.

Last week, Loretta Lynch's nomination to serve as the next U.S. Attorney General was finally passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee by a vote of 12-8. I use the word "finally" because there has been a significant delay with her confirmation. Why her confirmation has taken so long confounds me. I mean, what exactly is the Senate majority waiting for? What is the delay?

The fact that it took over 100 days to just get her to a committee vote is particularly troubling when one considers how long it took to actually confirm former Attorneys General: Janet Reno, 29 days; John Ashcroft, 42 days; Michael Mukasey, 53 days; and Alberto Gonzales, who had to resign as Attorney General, 86 days.

Clearly, Attorney Lynch's confirmation has been singled out for delay. Ash Carter's confirmation moved expeditiously, and he is now the Secretary of Defense. His hearing took place on February 4. He was voted out of committee on February 11, and ultimately confirmed on the Senate floor on February 12.

When testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Attorney Lynch showed grace under pressure while enduring long hours of vigorous questioning. Later, she provided answers to hundreds of questions, all on the record, resulting in more than 200 pages of testimony. Her professionalism and responsiveness are well documented.

Further, Senators in both parties have lauded Attorney Lynch's qualifications. Her record speaks for itself. Senator HATCH, one of the three Republicans—shamefully, three Republicans—who recently voted in favor of Attorney Lynch's nomination in committee, stated:

I have concluded that Ms. Lynch's full record, including but hardly limited to her hearing testimony, shows that she is qualified to serve as Attorney General.

That is all that they are trying to show to the American public. All they need to say is that she is qualified. If they had the President and the White House, they would pick who they want. But they don't have the President and the White House, so they have to deal with who he picks. And she is qualified.

Further, Senators in both parties understand how important it is to fill the position of Attorney General. Yet she continues to be penalized by many members of the majority party for President Obama's immigration policies and a general disdain for Attorney General Holder. Here we are stopping the Attorney General nomination because of immigration, we won't fund the Department of Homeland Security because of immigration—there is a problem in the Congress of the United States. In fact, she is being judged for the actions of others, and we know that. This is nothing more than political gamesmanship.

I call on my colleagues in the other Chamber to stop the charade and get

on with the confirmation. I urge the Senate to put Attorney Lynch's nomination on the floor immediately. Judge Attorney Lynch on her record and her merit, and do it now.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. I thank Congresswoman FUDGE for her very, very pertinent remarks.

It is now my honor to yield to the freshman gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT).

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for the opportunity to speak. I want to thank Ms. KELLY from the great State of Illinois, as well as Mr. PAYNE from the great State of New Jersey for yielding me this time. I want to extend my support for the confirmation of Ms. Loretta Lynch for the position of Attorney General.

As a New Yorker, indeed a Brooklynite, a former Bronx district attorney, as well as having worked at the Justice Department, I have the utmost respect for Ms. Lynch, who has served the people of New York, and indeed this great country, is eminently qualified to be the Attorney General and should be confirmed.

TERRITORIAL VOTING RIGHTS

Ms. PLASKETT. I additionally, Mr. Speaker, would like to discuss another issue that is of grave importance to the people of the territories, and that is territorial voting rights.

As we commend the 50th anniversary of the March on Selma this week, and the subsequent passage of the Voting Rights Act, I want to once again call to the attention of my colleagues here in Congress that there are still American citizens today who do not have equal voting rights. While we may discuss the irrational and truly illogical mechanism which has excluded those who have been convicted of felonies from society for voting, I want to discuss another group which has been disenfranchised, that is some 4 million people to be exact. These are citizens of America's island territories—the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Northern Marianas—American citizens who willingly risk life and limb in defense of a great nation for which they do not have a vote. American citizens who, in their great patriotism, have paid the ultimate sacrifice, the sacrifice of their lives, and in this last conflict in Iraq and Iran, have died at a rate of seven times the national average.

Citizens of the current U.S. territories have bravely fought in every American conflict, indeed, including the American Revolution, when we gave our own person in Alexander Hamilton from the Virgin Islands to fight in that war. Some have even been awarded the Medal of Honor, which is the Nation's highest military honor. Yet, these citizens who have contributed and sacrificed so much still cannot vote for their Commander in Chief.

This inability to vote has a direct correlation to the poverty and disenfranchisement in so many areas that

the people of these island territories experience. Poverty in the 21st century is a shameful reality in our great Nation, and for decades it has been a serious and persistent problem in the Virgin Islands. Child poverty for us in the territories is a heartbreaking reality.

A recent report from the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands and Kids Count says 31 percent of the children in the Virgin Islands are living in poverty. To further underscore this troubling statistic, Virgin Islands families are struggling with a very high cost-of-living, driven by the fact that much of our food supplies must be imported, along with the very high cost of electricity. We pay some of the highest prices in the Nation. And while, thankfully, the American economy is on the rebound and reports of job growth are very good news, unemployment on the islands on which I live is 15 percent or more.

□ 1930

The benign neglect of this great Nation to the territories has got to end. Each island was bought for military purposes, and now that it is believed by the country that the physical geopolitical need is not there, the people have been forgotten. Indeed, some have even questioned whether the people were ever remembered on these islands, that the lands and the resources were what this Nation wanted, not the people. But we have contributed much, and we deserve better. Not tying citizenship and the right to vote to the soil—the sovereign soil—on which an individual is born controverts the most basic English and, thus, American law.

Mr. Speaker, Virgin Islanders, who are proud people dedicated to their families, committed to their faith, and are so very willing to work hard for a better and brighter future for themselves, their children, and, indeed, this country, deserve the right to vote.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you, Congresswoman PLASKETT, for educating our public on the challenges people on the Islands face. Your words are so pertinent as we go to Selma to remember the events of 50 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, it is now my distinct honor to call to the podium the gentleman from New York, Congressman HAKEEM JEFFRIES.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from Illinois for yielding, and of course I want to thank Congresswoman KELLY and Congressman PAYNE for their wonderful leadership in creating this opportunity for members of the Congressional Black Caucus to speak directly to the American people on an issue of great significance, the justice system generally, but specifically, the urgent need to confirm Loretta Lynch as our next Attorney General.

Let me say parenthetically that it feels good to be in the presence of my two classmates, R. KELLY and D. PAYNE. I feel like I am in the midst of celebrity. Certainly, they have done a

tremendous job in calling us all together.

We have got a serious issue that we need this Capitol to confront. In the midst of terrorists who are all across the world who want to strike at our homeland, not only are we dealing with a dynamic where some in the House of Representatives refuse to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security because of an unnecessary obsession with the President's executive action on immigration—let me note, of course, though individuals may differ on its legality, every President since Dwight Eisenhower has taken executive action on immigration. It has occurred 39 times since the 1950s.

President Eisenhower did it; President Nixon did it. President Ford did it; President Reagan did it; President George Herbert Walker Bush did it; and President George W. Bush did it. Every President since Eisenhower has taken executive action to provide some form of immigration relief. But, of course, when President Obama steps forward to deal with our Nation's current problems, a constitutional crisis has been provoked.

What also seems to be interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the effort to address the issues that some may have with President Obama's executive action has crossed over into trying to stop, delay, and obstruct Loretta Lynch from becoming our Nation's next Attorney General. Some over on the Senate side have even said as such: Well, we are concerned that she has got a supportive attitude as it relates to President Obama's executive action.

Well, many of my good friends on the other side of the aisle are so-called strict constructionists. They believe in the sanctity of original intent as it relates to the Constitution. Well, the Constitution had an article I legislative branch, an article II executive branch, and an article III judicial branch. And the Founders suggested that if there are issues that need to be worked out, it is the court's job to do it. So there is a lawsuit right now pending in Texas challenging the legality and the constitutionality of the President's executive action on immigration. Let the courts do their job. Stop holding hostage our Nation's safety and security, and stop holding hostage the confirmation of Loretta Lynch.

If you take a look at her resume, no reasonable person could argue that she is not exquisitely qualified. Her resume reads like the American Dream: a Southern girl born in North Carolina, raised by a school librarian mother and a Baptist preacher father. She excelled in her elementary and high school studies so much so that she went off to college at Harvard University and then got a law degree from that same institution, one of the best law schools in the world.

She then joined a high-powered litigation law firm in New York, excelled there, but then after several years

took, I believe, what was a 75 percent cut in salary and left the private sector so she could go work as a Federal prosecutor and do some good. In that office, she quickly rose through the ranks, tried high-profile cases in the rough and tumble of New York City with grace and with dignity, always making sure that she was guided by the law and the facts—not politics, drama, and hyperbole.

Loretta Lynch was confirmed twice, I believe, by the United States Senate unanimously. The American people recognize that this is a Congress that can't agree on basic things, yet unanimously Loretta Lynch has been confirmed twice as the lead prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York.

By the way, she is a proud Brooklyn resident now, and I had the honor and privilege of representing Ms. Lynch when I was in the State legislature. She has excelled as the consummate law enforcement professional. She is fair, she is equitable, she is tough, and she is just.

So we are here today simply to say it is time to confirm her. The President has made the observation: You can't stand Eric Holder. The easiest way to get rid of him is to confirm Loretta Lynch.

What is the hold up? Allow her to take the helm over these final 20 or so months so that we have some stability at the all-important Department of Justice. We need all hands on deck right now as it relates to the war on terror. We need the FBI, the CIA, the NSA, and the Department of Homeland Security. We have got to be correct 100 percent of the time. Terrorists only have to be right once. It seems to me that if you have a confirmation pending of a clearly qualified individual to head the Department of Justice, the responsible thing to do is to act, and to act now.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank my good friends R. KELLY and D. PAYNE for giving me this opportunity to spend a few moments on behalf of a tremendous Brooklynite, by way of North Carolina, who is clearly qualified to be our Nation's next Attorney General. It is time to bring the confirmation to the floor and to allow her to serve the American people.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you kindly to the gentleman from New York, Congressman HAKEEM JEFFRIES, a man of much wisdom and truth.

Congressman PAYNE, we have heard from a number of Members why Loretta Lynch would be a great Attorney General. Hopefully, we can move on this and she will be confirmed very soon.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to introduce one of my freshman colleagues, the woman from the great State of Ohio, Congresswoman extraordinaire JOYCE BEATTY.

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my classmate and colleagues for hosting us this evening for the Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour.

Mr. Speaker, during the past month, we honored the great achievements and rich history of African Americans and the African American community. We reflected on an unfortunate journey through slavery and segregation, prejudices and discrimination. Though we bring Black History Month to a close, the Congressional Black Caucus will continue to fight for justice. Tonight our Special Order hour is Bridging the Divide: Observations on Race and Justice in America.

Our attention to the divides in our society, however, does not end because we entered a new month. We must remain focused on how we can bridge the divides in our society and how we can bring our Nation closer together. The divides are striking, and we know them all too well: the school-to-prison pipeline, education disparities, health disparities, the injustices in our justice system.

It is well established in fact that students of color face harsher punishments in schools than their White peers, leading to a higher number of youth of color in detention, suspension, and, yes, expelled. Mr. Speaker, African American students are arrested far more often than their White classmates. Black and Hispanic students represent more than 70 percent of those involved in school-related arrests or referrals to law enforcement. Currently, African Americans make up two-fifths and Hispanics one-fifth of confined youth today.

Disparities are found not only in how we punish behavior in schools, but also how we fund education. Mr. Speaker, this is true in K-12. It is also true in higher education. And we know that a college degree is a path to a middle class life. As African American students graduate with more debt than their White classmates, the cuts to Pell grants are threatening African American access to a better education. Without the Pell grant program, hundreds of thousands of young African Americans would not be able to afford college.

The disparities in access to health coverage are startling. The infant mortality rate among African Americans is 2.3 times that of non-Hispanic Whites, and African American infants are four times more likely than non-Hispanic White infants to die, mostly due to complications related to birth weight.

Mr. Speaker, we must confront these prejudices and these injustices in our Nation head-on. The Congressional Black Caucus is committed to resolving these challenges. The Congressional Black Caucus has fought to ensure funding the Pell grant. Pell grants are contained in each year's appropriations bills. We have worked hard to make sure that the maternity and newborn care are part of health care plans under the Affordable Care Act. Over 390,000 African American women in the individual market alone are projected to gain maternity coverage thanks—yes, thanks—to the Affordable Care

Act. Our task force on the elimination of sentencing disparities is moving the ball on how Black men and women are treated in the judicial system.

As we have been working here in Congress, our partners, the Deltas, my sorority, Delta Sigma Theta sorority, held their annual Delta Days in the Nation's Capital today with thousands of women from across this Nation gathering and advocating for these same disparities and injustices.

As Deltas were uniting in their efforts today in our Nation's Capital, my sorors and I were also uniting for one of our very own—nominee Loretta Lynch. Last week, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted 12-8 to approve the confirmation of Loretta Lynch as the next United States Attorney General, bringing her confirmation to the full Senate for consideration.

I remember it all too well a couple weeks before that when we were in that hearing room. It looked like a sea of red as Deltas marched in and lined up one after another wearing our colors, crimson and cream. Deltas lined the outside of the hearing room. Mr. Speaker, we did that because, prior to entering that room, media and some of my colleagues on the other side had tried to make it a bad thing that she organized and was a founder of her college chapter of Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

□ 1945

What we were able to do was to show them when we work together, whether that is Democrats and Republicans or sorority members or nonsorority members, when it is the right thing to do, we can make a difference.

I was so proud last week to sit there on the front row with my other colleagues—with our chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressman G.K. BUTTERFIELD; with the 100th woman sworn into the United States Congress, Congresswoman ALMA ADAMS; to be there with the 21st national president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE.

We sat there next to Loretta Lynch's father, Reverend Lorenzo Lynch of North Carolina, while the Judiciary Committee favorably reported the nomination on a vote that was closer than it needed to be.

Ms. Lynch's nomination is well deserved and historic. Ms. Lynch testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee for nearly 8 hours, and she responded to nearly 900 written questions, which is unprecedented. Many of the written questions, Mr. Speaker, were from Senators who had already declared their opposition to her nomination.

Ms. Lynch's nomination has now been pending far longer than any recent Attorney General's nomination which, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, is shameful. She deserves to be voted our next Attorney General. If Senators have a reason to vote against her nomination, they should make their case

public. Yes, hiding behind procedural tactics does not help our Nation.

As the Senate has an opportunity to unite behind a well-qualified nominee for a critical position, Congress Members will have an opportunity to be united this weekend when Democrats and Republicans will travel to Alabama to march to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Selma marches.

Fifty years ago, people marched for equal voting rights. Out of those marches, we got the Voting Rights Act. However, disparities remain, and the Voting Rights Act has been eroded.

We can end this divide, Mr. Speaker, of who votes if my Republican colleagues would bring up the Voting Rights Amendment Act, H.R. 885. Let me say that again, Mr. Speaker. We can end the divide of who can vote if my Republican colleagues would bring up the Voting Rights Amendment Act, H.R. 885.

How long will it take? How long must we wait to have equal rights and justice? It is well past time that we deliver to all Americans what they deserve.

Like we did 50 years ago in Selma, we must do so again today and stand united arm in arm, as my Congressional Black Caucus colleagues and I did recently in Ferguson and as we will do tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

Together, united, we can bring an end to the disparities that hold our hardworking families back from achieving the middle class dreams and the dreams of all Americans: that we should be equal.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you to the gentlewoman from the great State of Ohio. You have done a great job describing the challenges and sharing the progress that has been made thus far for our constituents of color. You have given us a call to action.

Mr. Speaker, once confirmed, Loretta Lynch will replace Eric Holder as Attorney General. In that role, she will be in charge of managing and directing the policies of our Nation's law enforcement officers.

Ms. Lynch, as we have heard, is uniquely fitted to serve that role for our Nation, especially at this critical point in our national discourse. As U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Ms. Lynch currently serves as the chief Federal prosecutor for Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and Long Island.

The death of Eric Garner this past July occurred on Staten Island, within Ms. Lynch's jurisdiction. Eric Garner's death—followed by the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, this past August—stirred a national discussion on use of force by police. Unfortunately, this discussion has produced increased animosity and distrust between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve. This is especially true in communities of color.

This is not the right approach, Mr. Speaker. This is not the way to move

our country forward. We cannot afford distrust between law enforcement and the communities they are tasked with protecting. What we need is increased compassion, increased understanding, and increased trust between police and communities, and Loretta Lynch understands this.

In her opening statement before the Senate Judiciary Committee last month, Ms. Lynch stated:

Few things have pained me more than reported tensions and division between law enforcement and the communities we serve. If confirmed as Attorney General, one of my key priorities will be to work to strengthen the vital relationships of courageous law enforcement personnel in the communities we serve.

My family members have served and do serve in law enforcement. I have many friends in law enforcement. I have been fortunate enough to have many positive experiences with the law enforcement community. I understand just how courageous and brave the men and women who dedicate their lives to keeping us safe truly are.

However, I also understand the fear many citizens in communities of color have toward law enforcement following these tragic events. Nobody should live in fear of the institutions put in place to protect them. To move forward, we must change the conversation from law enforcement versus community to law enforcement and community.

Essential to advancing this cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship is the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, or COPS office, within the Department of Justice. COPS is tasked with building trust and mutual respect between police and their communities.

Increasing trust is essential to advancing public safety. A citizen who trusts their local police office and understands their mission is less likely to engage in antisocial and unlawful behavior; and a police officer who can empathize with the fears, sensibilities, and concerns of community members will be less likely to take rash, unwarranted, or disproportionate responses to those unlawful actions.

These focused efforts allow for law enforcement agencies and communities to work together and, instead of simply addressing immediate concerns, address systemic issues plaguing communities, many of which serve as the root cause of the violence and crime that occurs.

The COPS program's motto is: "Building Relationships, Solving Problems." For the past 20 years, COPS has done just that. COPS grants have given billions of dollars to State and local law enforcement agencies to hire police officers, provide technical assistance, and conduct training programs teaching collaboration skills, increasing shared understanding, and advancing sensitivity training.

Mr. Speaker, I can think of no better person to lead our Justice Department and further advance the efforts of the

COPS program than Loretta Lynch. Ms. Lynch is exactly right in her desired focus of prioritizing improving relationships between law enforcement and communities. Her vision is exactly what the Justice Department and the COPS program, in particular, need at this critical point in time.

I fully understand the frustration, anger, and deep concern felt in communities across the country; however, it is simply unsustainable to have a dynamic where police fear communities and communities fear the police.

In order to ensure that all State and local law enforcement agencies and the entire justice system treat all Americans fairly and value all American lives equally, we must hold law enforcement to high professional standards and provide them with necessary training to effectively protect and police diverse communities.

Mr. Speaker, this month, we recognize the 50th anniversary of the March on Selma, Alabama. The brave men and women who marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge that day and the countless others through the Jim Crow South were on the receiving end of horrendous and unspeakable actions of police brutality.

We have come a long way over the 50 years, Mr. Speaker; however, much work remains. I can think of no better person to lead that charge than Loretta Lynch. I look forward to her service as our Nation's Attorney General and the robust COPS program she will advance.

I yield to my great partner from the great State of New Jersey.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman from Illinois for her concise assessment of the nomination of an outstanding prosecutor, outstanding attorney, and outstanding American.

As it was stated by one of my colleagues, Ms. Lynch has followed and been a part of the American Dream, coming from meager beginnings, having a mother and father who cared for her and nurtured her, allowed her to get a good education and move on to—as it was stated—one of the best schools in our Nation and in the world and also to get her law degree from that same school.

Now, it appears to me, based on the hearings that I saw, Ms. Lynch has one problem. Is it her qualifications? No. Is it her demeanor? No. Has she done everything that she has been asked to do as a prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York? Yes.

Well, why is she not qualified? Well, no one is saying that she is not qualified. There is a political issue in the way, and that political issue is that she is the nominee of President Barack Obama, and that is her only issue, as I see it.

She has done everything that a good American should do: played by the rules all her life, pulled herself up by her bootstraps, got a good education, went into the private sector and then

decided, Do you know what, I am going to go be a Federal prosecutor at a 75 percent decrease in salary.

Now, if that is not an American committed to this Nation, I don't know what is, so her only violation is that she was nominated by this President. Immigration continues to be the issue that is the rub. That is why we don't have funding for the Department of Homeland Security: because of immigration, because my colleagues on the other side don't agree with what the President did.

This is outrageous, this is absolutely outrageous, that a person that has done everything that they are supposed to do gets to this point and was confirmed twice by the Senate—now, I don't know if President Obama nominated her either one of those times, but now that he is nominating her for this position, well, she just doesn't cut it, there are issues.

They are not her issues. They are issues with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and their disdain for their President at times, absolute disdain. It is a matter of you are better off not saying that you are involved with the President the way it is going around here. It makes no sense. It absolutely makes no sense.

Now, here is a woman that has allowed herself to go through this process and knew it was going to be rigorous, knew there were going to be challenges, knew she would be challenged, and came through the committee 12-8. But people initially that were going to support her, Mr. Speaker, had decided, Well, now, there is something wrong.

I mean, what happened? What happened in 2 weeks, in the space of 3 weeks, that has made you anti-Loretta Lynch?

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We have issues all over this Nation, Mr. Speaker, that we need to be dealing with, and the Department of Homeland Security is one of them. We need to fund the Department of Homeland Security. It is interesting. I hear my colleagues' interest and concern about immigration and people coming across the border.

If you don't fund the Department of Homeland Security, how do you think that work continues? If you think it is bad now, don't fund the Department. You have people listening—the terrorists. You don't think terrorists are listening to this? You don't think this is a great opportunity for them to decide to maybe go rogue, to come out of their lone wolf status and do what they need to do because they know no one is minding the store because we decided to furlough people? You are concerned about this Nation and its security? It doesn't make sense to me.

We have many issues in the African American community, and we are here every other Monday night to express them—criminal justice, the issue around “Black lives matter,” and the

perceptions of police treatment in the African American community. I can tell you a personal story about my interaction, as a youngster, with a member of the police force back in my home in Newark, New Jersey.

It was a horrendous, horrendous episode in my life, but I got a break because the officer realized that my father was a member of the city council of that town. Prior to seeing my name on my driver's license and learning that, he told me that, if I didn't produce the papers that he wanted, they would throw me so far under the jail that they would never find me. But once I produced this document that said that I was all of a sudden somebody—I am a person; I am relevant—then he became nurturing. He said: Don't you know that making a U-turn is dangerous? and became paternal, but prior to that, it was that they would throw me so far under the jail that they would never find me.

So I stand here, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of the people who wouldn't have gotten that break. It is my obligation to make sure that the playing field is level, not because you are related to someone, not because you know someone, not because you have connections. Every American should be afforded the opportunity I was afforded that day.

In closing, I would just like to thank the gentlewoman, ROBIN KELLY, for her leadership in leading tonight's Congressional Black Caucus hour. These Special Orders give us the opportunity to speak directly to the American people about the work on their behalf and the issues that we care about. This is something that we do, and we are honored to be able to do it.

I would also like to thank the people at home who have tuned in tonight. It is our point to engage in an ongoing and meaningful dialogue, and I hope that they will continue to join us on Monday nights.

We began by discussing the nomination of Loretta Lynch as the next U.S. Attorney General. Ms. Lynch's nomination has been slow-walked by the Republicans, who would rather make it more about the President's immigration policy than about Ms. Lynch's qualifications and strength of character. Ms. Lynch has earned a number of outside endorsements, including from the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and her record is impeccable. It is the hope of this caucus that the full Senate comes to realize the urgency of her nomination and confirms her immediately.

Ms. Lynch's professional record suggests that she will embrace the vision of the Department of Justice, whose mission is to advance the cause of justice and equality for all Americans.

This is absolutely critical to the African American community, whose needs are not currently being met by our criminal justice system. Today, we see a criminal justice system that does not treat all Black lives as though they

matter. From Staten Island to Ferguson, unarmed Black men have been the victims of excessive, deadly force by law enforcement. This creates and perpetuates a distrust in our communities, and it makes it increasingly difficult to have a meaningful dialogue between law enforcement and the communities they are charged with protecting.

These negative perceptions of police treatment are compounded by a number of other factors, including the disturbing gaps in incarceration rates. African Americans are incarcerated at a rate that is seven times higher than that of our White counterparts. These individuals are removed from the workforce often for drug-related crimes during their prime working years. They struggle to reenter society, having difficulty finding jobs and becoming productive members of their communities. Instead of immediately incarcerating those who commit drug-related, nonviolent crimes, more effort should be devoted to rehabilitation.

At the same time, we need to reevaluate the effectiveness of the war on drugs, a war that disproportionately affects African Americans and devastates African American and minority communities. When ex-felons reenter society, we need to ensure that our criminal justice system avoids purely punitive measures against them, including ex-felon disenfranchisement.

Finally, there is the reforming of our criminal justice system so as to eliminate disparities in sentences. According to the National Urban League, mandatory minimums and disparities in crack cocaine sentencing incarcerated countless numbers of African Americans for an inhumane length of time and had the U.S. as the world leader in prison population. This has created a modern-day caste system in America. When we address these issues, we will make significant progress toward a criminal justice system that reflects our values of full equality for all Americans.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today along with my colleagues, Congressman DONALD PAYNE, JR. and Congresswoman ROBIN KELLY, in support of the CBC Special Order Hour entitled: “Bridging The Divide: Observations on Race and Justice in America.” And as I reflect on some of the issues affecting the intersection of race and justice that still plague this country, I am deeply saddened.

Just on the other side of the Capitol, the Republican-led Senate has delayed the confirmation of Loretta Lynch as our next Attorney General, forcing her to wait for a vote longer than any other attorney general nominee in the last three decades. Despite this long delay, the Senate was able to quickly confirm the nomination of our new Defense Secretary Ashton Carter. Critics in the Senate have called into question Ms. Lynch's qualifications, dismissing her as “just another Eric Holder,” choosing to ignore her exceptional academic record and impressive career accomplishments.

In the past few months, this nation has been rocked by the deaths of black men at the hands of police, and the fiery nationwide protests in response. The lost lives of Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Mike Brown, and so many others have only contributed to the painful perception that black life is devalued in America. Many pundits have observed these tragedies and the various responses to them as proof that race relations in this country have regressed.

There are currently more black men behind bars in 2015 than there were enslaved in 1850, and these sentencing disparities have far reaching consequences. Among democratic nations, the United States enforces some of the world's most restrictive disenfranchisement laws for felons, keeping millions of men and women from ever being able to fulfill their civic duty. We ask them to pay their debt to society, we require them to re-enter society as productive adults, yet we strip them of such a basic democratic freedom. Without question, these laws disproportionately affect African Americans, and Mr. Speaker, it is time for a change.

While the picture I have briefly painted may seem bleak, I remain encouraged by the resolve of so many Americans around the country. Nationwide protests by people of all backgrounds have forced local lawmakers to confront their policies and make sure that they reflect the communities they govern. But as we all know, there is a long road ahead. And as the conscious of the Congress, it is the responsibility of the Congressional Black Caucus, to ensure that this august chamber addresses these issues essential to the quality of life for all Americans.

WILL THE U.S. AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ALLOW IRAN TO DEVELOP A NUCLEAR WEAPON?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. STEWART) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. STEWART. Mr. Speaker, I am honored tonight to lead this Special Order on what is one of the most critical issues facing our Nation in generations. Now, I know that sounds dramatic and that it sounds like it is a statement that is just designed to capture people's attention, but it is actually true. This is a question that will define our safety and our security for generations to come.

The question we face and the issue that we want to address tonight is: Will the U.S. and the international community allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon?

For generations, it has been the policy of Republican and Democratic administrations that we would not allow that to happen. It is critical to the security of our friends and allies in the region that we are successful in denying them this. It is critical to our own national security, to the interests at home, and to our interests abroad that we not allow Iran to nuclearize their weapons program. So we come to this question: Will we allow that to happen?

Tonight, I stand here, along with many of my colleagues, to express my great concern about what the President is doing and the state of the negotiations as they are now. Tomorrow, we get to hear from the Prime Minister of Israel. I look forward to hearing his comments. He certainly has, as they say, a dog in this fight, but so do we. Let me begin by telling you a little bit about my background.

I spent 14 years as a pilot in the Air Force. I flew the B-1. At one point, I was the pilot rep for the implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, or START I and START II, implementing a treaty that we had with the former Soviet Union. This was a very interesting experience. I learned a lot from this. I certainly learned of the details and the necessity of following through with every tiny detail of these treaties and of implementing them. Our Russian counterparts could show up at our base at any time with only a few-hours' notice. They had access to the most highly sensitive areas. They would measure; they would observe; they would talk; they had incredibly sophisticated ways of verifying that we were complying with elements of the START Treaty, as we did with Russia.

These elements, in my opinion, are one of the keys to making sure that this treaty that the President is negotiating is successful, which brings us then to, really, one of our central questions, because I learned from my own experience that, for a treaty as sophisticated as this would have to be to be successful, there has to be a modicum of trust, an element of trust, between the two parties—a grain, a core of trust—where they both want the treaty to succeed. I don't know if we have that now.

I had the opportunity to address this concern with Secretary Kerry just last week. I asked him very simply: Can you name me a single example where the United States or our allies for generations have had a positive, constructive experience with Iran? Can you show me any example of how they have worked with us in a positive manner? He could not provide me with a single example.

Once again, this is one of the central questions that we have to address, so let's ask this question: Can we trust Iran? Let me explain to you why I think the answer to that is "no."

You see this map beside me. This indicates Iran's range of influence around the world, and it reaches, as you see, from North Korea, through central Asia, through the Middle East, through parts of Europe, to South America and to Mexico. Iran has been a state sponsor of terrorism for more than 30 years. They, by themselves, have developed an extensive military complex—the Defense Industries Organization, as they call it. The DIO is able to supply Iran with all of the materials that they need in order to carry out their terrorist activities around the world—all of the ammunition, all of the equipment, all of the weapons.

In fact, Iran is the primary supplier of the weapons and ammunition of two other officially recognized state sponsors of terror—Sudan and Syria. It is the primary sponsor of a number of listed foreign terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah and Hamas and numerous Shi'a militias in Iraq.

Iran has directed the terrorist activities of numerous of these Shi'a militias, and let me point out this fact: over the last dozen years or so, these Iranian-backed militias have been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of American soldiers working in the theater. Hundreds of American soldiers have lost their lives due to the direct activities of Iran.

As I mentioned, and as you can see on the map, they engage in narcotics trafficking and human smuggling in Mexico. In the tri-border area of Brazil and Argentina and Paraguay, Hezbollah has a safe haven for recruiting, training, and fundraising. Even Venezuela is, similarly, a safe haven. In India, they provide support for Syed Kalbe Jawad, who is recruiting Shi'a militias to fight in Iraq and Syria. They cooperate with North Korea in cyber warfare. The list of their interventions in a negative and a destructive way around the world is, indeed, very long.

□ 2015

They are a strategic ally of Russia and China. They provide port facilities. They are a strategic ally of North Korea. They have cooperated with North Korea to develop ballistic missiles.

So, once again, let me come back to my conversation with the Secretary of State, where I ask him: Can you give us a single example of a positive or constructive alliance or agreement or partnership that we have had with this Nation of Iran?

And the answer has, once again, been no.

Iranian leaders have stated their objective is to destroy Israel and, of course, the great Satan, the U.S. In fact, I can show you.

Look at this picture, and you may wonder what it is. It is not something taken from World War II or from another war. This actually happened last week, where Iran completed a successful exercise in a simulated attack on a U.S. aircraft carrier. Does that sound like the activity of a potential partner?

Hezbollah has stockpiled approximately 60,000 surface-to-surface rockets in Lebanon. Hamas has stockpiled approximately 10,000 surface-to-surface rockets in Gaza. Iran is, of course, the primary supplier of both of these, and their stated purpose is to destroy Israel, to wipe it off the map.

As the current Iranian President Rouhani said: "The Zionist regime has been a wound in the body of the Islamic world for years, and the wound should be removed."

The former President said, in 2012, that Iran has no roots in the Middle East and that it would be eliminated.

So let me conclude my part of this hour by emphasizing once again that Iran has demonstrated several generations now of destructive, war-like, deadly activities around the world designed to destroy Israel, designed to weaken or destroy the United States, killing American soldiers overseas, and this is the partner that we think we can trust with one of the most critical issues of our day. I hope the President realizes the danger that we would face if they prove not to be a reliable partner.

I will let others share in my time today. First, I would like to invite my friend, DENNIS ROSS from Florida, a member of the Financial Services Committee, to speak.

Mr. ROSS. I thank my good friend from Utah (Mr. STEWART).

Madam Speaker, on November 4, 1979, the American Embassy in Tehran was seized and Iranians held 50 American hostages for more than 444 days. Each year, on November 4, Iranians celebrate death to America day to commemorate the 1979 seizure of our Embassy. So while we are celebrating Thanksgiving, President's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, and Labor Day, for the last 35 years, Iran has been celebrating, once a year, death to America day. The party with whom we are negotiating nuclear capabilities celebrates death to America day.

In 1983, two car bombs exploded in Beirut, killing 300 United States marines. Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants claimed responsibility for this mass murder.

Make no mistake, Iran is the lead sponsor of radical Islamic terrorism throughout the world today, including sleeper cells in the United States.

As Mr. STEWART just pointed out, last week, Iran's Revolutionary Guard staged war games in the Strait of Hormuz. When they blew up that mock U.S. aircraft carrier, Iran's Supreme Leader, the Ayatollah Khamenei, proclaimed that "Americans are ready to be buried at the bottom of the water"—the supreme commander, leader of the party with whom we are negotiating a nuclear capabilities deal.

Madam Speaker, my point is that Iran has a ruthless track record of terrorizing the West, including the United States. Let's be perfectly clear: Iran wants to destroy America, as they claim every November 4, and as they demonstrated last week in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran is a nuclear threshold state.

Recently, just 2 weeks ago, I had the privilege of traveling to Israel and meeting with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. During my visit, the Prime Minister and I discussed in great detail the threat posed by Iran to Israel and the region. Iran openly declares its intention to destroy the State of Israel.

Today, Iran has the largest and most diverse missile arsenal in the Middle East. The missiles are capable of car-

rying nuclear and chemical weaponry within a range of 1,500 miles. With bared teeth, Iran, in conjunction with North Korea, is developing a longer range missile capable of reaching the United States. In just a few years, they will have that technology.

I am deeply concerned about the current round of negotiations between President Obama and Iran. The current deal coming out of the White House would allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons after 10 years. A long-term deal that allows Iran to develop nuclear capabilities only strengthens the hand of Iran and fortifies their determination to destroy Israel, dominate the Middle East, the Muslim world, and the entire globe, including the United States.

Iran says its nuclear program is entirely for peaceful purposes and not aimed at developing nuclear weapons. However, Madam Speaker, history is replete with examples that argue quite the opposite. Iran is not our friend. Iran should never be allowed to develop nuclear weapons.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to hearing Prime Minister Netanyahu detail his opposition to this agreement that would grant Iran a license to develop nuclear weapons.

President Obama cannot unilaterally implement this dangerous plan. Congress has the responsibility to prevent this foreign policy disaster from ever occurring. We must stand firmly with Israel. Unless Iran is willing to forgo its entire nuclear program, the United States should not ease sanctions and should allow Iran to become a nuclear state.

Mr. STEWART. Thank you, Mr. ROSS, for your comments tonight and for your defense of these concerns that we have.

I would ask the question, to emphasize something that you said, sir: Why is Iran building ICBMs?

As Charles Krauthammer pointed out in the last few days in an article, he said: You don't build ICBMs to deliver dynamite.

It is very clear what their intentions are, I would think. And although we will come back to this, I would like to follow up with one other point that you made. But before we do that, let me turn the time now to my friend, Mr. ROGER WILLIAMS from Texas. He also serves on the House Financial Services Committee.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, Israel's Prime Minister will make a direct appeal to the American people. His plea will not be made in front of cameras at a press conference. They will not be made from his home country 6,000 miles away. Tomorrow morning, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu will stand right here behind me at this podium to address this Congress.

The Prime Minister will speak before us to directly petition Congress and the American people because, sadly, he has, like so many, lost faith in the

abilities of our Commander in Chief. The Prime Minister has lost faith in an administration whose foreign policy summarized the President's guiding advice: Don't do stupid stuff.

He no longer trusts this American President, whose aids slander his name to the press. He is skeptical about the State Department's trust above all else policy with Iran, whose leaders have publicly proclaimed their desire for Israel to be wiped off the map. He regrets the President's inability to outright condemn Hamas, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization, without blaming Israel in the same sentence.

Mr. Netanyahu has rightly questioned America's once unwavering commitment to his homeland, Israel—Israel, our partner, our ally, but most importantly, our friend.

Madam Speaker, we have responsibility—no, we have a commitment—to watch over and protect our greatest advocate in the Middle East. To my colleagues in this body that do not believe in the United States' moral obligation to watch over Israel, I remind them about the United States' strategic obligation. Israel's interests are closely aligned with ours. Israel benefits from a secure America, just as America benefits in having a secure, stable, and trustworthy ally in a very volatile, dangerous region.

Despite my personal beliefs that America has a moral obligation to ensure Israel's peace and prosperity, I cannot disregard the obvious strategic benefits our relationship has brought us. The Obama administration's inability to realize this twofold bond between the United States and Israel illustrates how out of touch they really are.

Mr. Prime Minister, I welcome you to the Chamber of the United States House of Representatives.

Mr. President, you and your supporters who refuse to meet with our friend, I must remind you of your foreign policy advice. Simply, you said: Don't do stupid stuff.

In God we trust.

Mr. STEWART. Thank you, Mr. WILLIAMS.

I can't let the moment pass without reemphasizing something you said: Don't do stupid stuff.

Is it stupid to trust Iran? Is it stupid to negotiate an agreement that is fatally flawed? And I have deep concerns about this agreement in that it is fatally flawed.

For example, and perhaps most glaringly, there is this provision that allows for a sunset. We are not precluding Iran from developing nuclear weapons. In the very best case scenario, we are simply delaying them from developing nuclear weapons.

How in the world is it within the interest of the United States or our allies in the region or others in the area, as well, to simply say we are going to stop you from developing nuclear weapons for 10 years, which is reportedly one of the provisions of this agreement?

That doesn't stop them. It delays them. It delays them only if it assumes that they adhere to the agreement, something that many of us are very skeptical about.

I could elaborate, but let me turn the time now to my friend, ROBERT PITTENGER from North Carolina. We came to Congress together. He is active in the foreign affairs community, and, I am proud to say, he is the chairman of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare.

Mr. PITTENGER.

Mr. PITTENGER. Thank you, my good friend, Congressman STEWART, for your leadership tonight on the very important timing of this, precluding the important meetings we will have this week.

Madam Speaker, I am here tonight to pay tribute and gratitude to Prime Minister Netanyahu for taking the time to come to the United States to express his grave concern over the perilous threat that he sees for the United States and for Israel.

Since 1948, with the inception of Israel, they have been a steadfast, loyal, democratic ally for the United States. They have stood strong as a surrogate on our behalf, fighting terrorism, Hamas, Hezbollah, and al Qaeda.

Being there in Israel last week, in the Golan Heights, I saw young men and women, 20 and 21 years old, in the tank division prepared for battle. They were courageous. Down in Gaza, the same type of commitment. They had the recognition of the realities of those missiles firing across, those missiles that are funded by Iran.

I met with the Prime Minister and I asked him the same question I asked him a year ago: Mr. Prime Minister, at such time that you need America, will America be there for you?

The best answer he could say was: Congressman, I hope so.

What a sad commentary on a relationship that we have with our most important ally in the Middle East.

The footprint of the terrorism of Iran is throughout the Middle East and, yes, throughout the world. They have been the primary funding agent for terrorism for the last 35 years. Every incident that you have seen in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, Yemen and other parts has their hand of funding and commitment.

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The Prime Minister understands the critical role that is played in addressing this threat. Like Winston Churchill, he is coming to America to awaken the world to this perilous threat, a threat that Winston Churchill saw, that he spoke of time and again. While the world allowed Germany to take Austria and Czechoslovakia, we deferred, we appeased, we thought nothing else would happen.

We have given concession after concession after concession to Iran, \$12 bil-

lion in repatriated oil profits have been remunerated back to Iran. We have fueled their economy, sustaining their economy, enabling them to go forward.

You know, in any negotiation—and I have been involved in many—you succeed with your adversary when you tighten the screws, not when you loosen them. We have had an inverse effect in this entire communication and dialogue with Iran.

What we have done has created an entity that is willing and able to continue this further negotiation because we have sustained their economy. Yes, the oil prices have come down, but what if we had kept the screws on them?

You know, the Soviet Union came to the table back in the late 1970s and the early 1980s and through the 1980s. Why did that happen? Because we had sustained economic pressure, sustained political pressure, sustained military pressure, sustained human rights pressure—we kept the pressure on.

We have relieved the pressure from Iran; and, as a result, we are faced with the consequences now where they have changed the entire narrative. The narrative in the beginning was: Should Iran have nuclear materials? Now, the narrative is: What level of nuclear materials should we allow Iran to have? That is how much we have lost in this process.

This is no time to be weak-kneed. This is a time to work with our allies in the Middle East. I have been and sat down with the Crown Prince in United Arab Emirates. I have sat down with the Emir in Qatar and with President el-Sisi. They all understand the gravity of terrorism. They all understand the issue of Iran. The world sees this threat. This is no time to appease; this is no time to defer.

This is the time to be strong. Ronald Reagan was strong. The world knew America was strong—yet he never fired a shot, and the Wall came down. When America is strong, the world is at peace. God help us to understand the gravity of this hour, the importance of the message that will come from Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Mr. STEWART. I thank Mr. PITTENGER for his remarks and for the great work that he does as the chairman of the Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare.

I have to interject here for just a moment something that others have alluded to as well, and that is this idea of a sunset provision. We have to recognize what a dramatic change in policy that is.

It is no longer our policy that we would not allow Iran to have nuclear weapons. It is simply our policy if that provision is agreed to that we would delay them from having nuclear weapons.

The sunset provision allows them to grow their economy. It lifts the sanctions. They can sell their oil. They can continue to finance terror operations around the world, all under the under-

standing that, in 10 years, they could resume their nuclear program. Again, that assumes that they don't cheat in the interim which is, in my opinion, likely that they will.

Let me ask this question: Why a sunset provision? Do you think the world is going to be more stable in 10 years than it is now? Will Iran become our trusted friend and ally over the next 10 years? Will they lose all of their regional ambitions? It will lead inevitably to a dangerous and chaotic and destabilizing arms race in the region.

Let me quote our own President. In an interview with *The Atlantic* about 3 years ago, he said: "It will not be tolerable to a number of States in that region for Iran to have a nuclear weapon and them not to have a nuclear weapon . . . and so the dangers of an Iran getting nuclear weapons that then leads to a free-for-all in the Middle East is something that I think would be very dangerous for the world."

Mr. President, I could not agree more, which is why it makes no sense for your agreement to contain anything close to a sunset provision that allows them to develop their nuclear weapons a few years down the road.

I would like to turn the time now to the gentleman from New Jersey, my friend TOM MACARTHUR. He serves on the House Committee on Armed Services, as well as the Committee on Natural Resources. He is one of the bright, young Members of the Congress.

Mr. MACARTHUR. Madam Speaker, I rise today with so many of my colleagues to not only reaffirm our friendship with the State of Israel, but to express my deep appreciation for it.

Our two countries share an unbreakable commitment to the democratic ideals of individual, religious, and economic freedom. Israel stands as a beacon of democracy in a region characterized by political repression. For that, she should be honored and protected.

Our friendship with Israel should not be a political talking point. It shouldn't be a friendship of convenience. We can't settle merely for maintaining the relationship between our two countries. We must strengthen it. Too often, we talk about the threats to Israel or what is in Israel's interest.

Madam Speaker, a threat to Israel is a threat to us. Israel's interest is our interest. As our closest ally in a highly unstable part of the world, Israel faces countless threats and challenges to her very existence. Without qualification or hesitation, the United States must stand by Israel's right to defend herself against terrorism and aggression by those who would do her harm.

The rise of the Islamic State and the growing instability in the region remind us that we cannot take our ally for granted. We must stand against a nuclear-capable Iran, as we have heard tonight, a very real and imminent threat that would jeopardize not only our ally, not only this region, but the freedom Israel deserves and the stability of the world.

The partnership between the United States and Israel is strong. Our shared history of cultural exchange and collaboration has enriched countless lives. Our open lines of trade have benefited not just Israel, but both of our great countries.

This is a friendship that will endure for generations, but we have to commit ourselves to it. If we continue our robust military aid and cooperation to Israel to ensure her security in the region, then the United States and Israel will continue to stand together as shining examples of democracy and freedom in the world.

Mr. STEWART. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend, Mr. MACARTHUR.

I now recognize another friend, someone who I have come to respect tremendously from the tireless work that she does on the House Committee on Armed Services and has become a leader among her peers here in Congress, the gentlelady from Indiana (Mrs. WALORSKI).

Mrs. WALORSKI. I thank the gentleman from Utah, and I commend those of my colleagues tonight who are here as well talking about the existential threat of a nuclear Iran.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my deepest concern over the growing threat of a nuclear Iran and the threat it poses to the rest of the world. Satellite images show that Iran's nuclear weapons can reach the eastern seaboard of the United States.

If Iran, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, achieves nuclear weapons capability, the effects would be catastrophic. While it is certain that a rogue Iran would target Israel as a one-bomb country, it is also certain that the U.S. is their target and final target.

News from last week's nuclear negotiations with Iran is troubling. Iran will be allowed the right to enrich, retain thousands of centrifuges—which they don't deserve—and build a plutonium reactor, which they should never have practical need of; yet during these talks, they continue to obstruct inspectors, who reported last week about the possible existence in Iran of undisclosed development of a nuclear payload for a missile.

What is more disturbing is that amidst of a hurting economy and harsh sanctions, Iran still managed to find a way to build, develop, and test their nuclear weapons capability.

Can you imagine the possibility of their capability if the current administration were to even lift those sanctions? One thing is very clear. We have made too many compromises since trying to broker a deal with Iran, and there have been too little consequences for their unwillingness to cooperate.

Past administrations were adamant that our position was zero enrichment and zero centrifuges. Under President Obama, this has been abandoned as being unrealistic. Negotiations began with an offer to end Iranian enrich-

ment. Now, today, the deal is a temporary arrangement that allows a strong, internationally authorized nuclear program.

If we lift sanctions and legitimize their nuclear developments, we are sending a signal to the rest of the world that a rogue state can disobey all rules, maintain their supply of illegal enrichment, and still get international leaders to approve an enrichment program.

A nuclear-armed Iran would dramatically change the balance of power in the Middle East and threaten freedom and peace for the rest of the world. They would clearly spark a nuclear arms race in the Middle East and destabilize the entire region.

Other nations, like Egypt, Turkey, and others will have no choice but to develop their own nuclear programs to protect their countries from the threat of Iran, not to mention that Iran will likely share their nuclear technology and know-how with extremist groups hostile to not only the United States, but also to our allies in the West.

If there is to be any hope of reaching a peaceful deal and if Iran wants prosperity and success for its own people, it must stop its pursuit of a nuclear weapon, sponsorship of terrorism, and human rights abuses.

If they truly want to move forward, they must give inspectors unfettered access to covert facilities. Iran has to cooperate and stop obstructing inspectors. Preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability is the surest way to prevent war and preserve peace.

As this unrest continues, the United States must maintain our rich partnership with our allies, including Israel, who is our closest ally in the Middle East. I welcome Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to the people's House tomorrow.

Mr. STEWART. Mrs. WALORSKI and the other speakers bring up many good points. Let me emphasize just a few of them if I could.

The New York Times reported just last week that the IAEA said Iran was still refusing to answer questions regarding its previous weapons program. Even in the midst of negotiating with the administration, they are still refusing to answer questions about their previous nuclear weapons program.

I think the administration, even now, has refused to release the full text of the deal. It has even been reported that there is an informal side deal that is something like a 30-plus page text.

These facts prevent observers, like myself and others, who are interested and concerned, from determining what constitutes cheating by the Iranians. There are so many other reasons that we are concerned about this.

Let me just mention one more very quickly. It was reported that Iran can still produce enough nuclear material to fuel a bomb in as little as 2 months. In as little as 2 months, they would be a breakout nation that would keep the

region—and, in fact, the entire world—on a knife's edge, wondering if they would make the decision to weaponize and to break out. Those are some of the concerns that we have.

Let me recognize my friend, the gentleman from Ohio, BRAD WENSTRUP. He is a past Army Reserve officer—thank you, sir, for your service. He is a doctor. He serves with me on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, as well as he serves on the Committee on Armed Services.

Dr. WENSTRUP.

□ 2045

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Congressman STEWART. I thank you for your service to our Nation in the Air Force and your service to our Nation here in Congress. I thank you for organizing this event here on the floor tonight.

As my colleagues have highlighted this evening, on the eve of Prime Minister Netanyahu's address to Congress, we stand with Israel and the Israeli people, shoulder to shoulder, in the face of growing Islamic extremism. The United States was the first country to recognize Israel upon its founding in the years after World War II.

Madam Speaker, it took us just 11 minutes to recognize the new nation cradled along the Mediterranean, in the land of Judea. Time and time again since then, Israel has been besieged, but our relationship has always stood firm, and that is because our friendship is built on the shared values of democracy, free enterprise, respect for life, and a commitment to a lasting peace.

Madam Speaker, I contend that when your very existence is in question and your neighbors vow to wipe you off the map, it is more than helpful to have a committed ally; it is necessary for your very survival.

Whether by the threat of terror tunnels and rocket barrages or the looming nuclear aspirations of Iran, now is not the time to turn away from our friend Israel.

In these challenging times, I am disappointed when I hear disparaging comments coming from our own government directed towards our friends in Israel. I am disappointed when an anonymous senior Obama administration official describes the Prime Minister with words I can't repeat in this Chamber.

I am disappointed when National Security Adviser Susan Rice calls the visit of our ally "destructive." I am disappointed when my colleagues publicly turn their back on our ally and boycott the Prime Minister's speech.

To them, I say: "Let us make it clear that we will never turn our backs on our steadfast friends in Israel, whose adherence to the democratic way must be admired by all friends of freedom." These aren't my words, Madam Speaker. These are the words of John F. Kennedy 56 years ago, and they still ring true today.

In stark contrast to the resolute JFK, the President is asking Congress

to stand silently to the side in his quest to negotiate with Iran. I cannot do that. In these perilous times, we can't afford silence. Iran's unhindered quest for a nuclear weapon and support for global terrorism threatens the stability of the Middle East, the security of our allies in the region, and the very existence of Israel.

Just last week, Iran conducted military drills to sink a replica Nimitz class aircraft carrier. While it made for some great propaganda film, I can't say it builds my confidence in Iran as negotiating in good faith. These hostile actions shouldn't be rewarded with further appeasement.

Madam Speaker, I daresay that this administration is more willing to negotiate with Iran than with Congress. If this administration was as firm in negotiating with Iran as with veto threats, we might actually stop Iran from getting the bomb.

We have a close ally in a dangerous region of the world and must stand strong. We are seeing too vividly the threat of radical Islam as its depravity sweeps across the Middle East. There is no more urgent of a time than right now for Congress to unequivocally stand with Israel.

Tomorrow, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu will be in this very Chamber speaking to Congress. The subject matter is timely: the threat of a nuclear Iran. In recent years, I have heard the leaders of Ukraine and South Korea address Congress, and we will soon hear from leaders of Afghanistan and the Vatican as well.

I understand that President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan was invited in exactly the same manner as Prime Minister Netanyahu. It is curious as to why we don't hear the same roar of disapproval.

We know that a nuclear Iran would tilt the balance of power across the region and across the world, throwing weight to the ill intentioned and the evil terrorist actors. This is a message that bears repeating again and again, whether by me or by the Prime Minister of Israel or by anybody who recognizes the threat.

As steadfast allies in our commitment to freedom, democracy, and peace, I welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu tomorrow.

Mr. STEWART. Thank you, Dr. WENSTRUP.

So we conclude our time tonight. Do you sense, do you understand, those of you who are listening and watching, do you see that we have legitimate and deeply-held concerns about the direction that this administration is moving? There are so many questions. Can we trust Iran?

You have seen and heard example after example of how they have worked against our interests, how they have been a destructive influence in so many parts of the world.

We ask the question, as I asked Secretary Kerry last week: Can you give

me a single example of them partnering with us or any of our allies in any positive way? The answer was no.

Are we being true to our allies? Israel is our only friend and ally in a chaotic part of the world. They recognize and respect human rights, including minority rights, including the rights of women.

They have called this an existential threat. There is a reason they call Israel a one-bomb nation. That is all it would take to destroy their entire country. Could we allow ourselves to be put in a position where that might be their reality? Is this in agreement with our own national interest?

Remember the map that I showed you, North Korea, throughout Asia, the Middle East, Central and South America, even on our borders of Mexico.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I hope the President understands our concerns. I hope he isn't so determined to add a feather in his legacy cap that would conclude an agreement that endangers our allies or our own national interest.

I sit on the House Select Committee on Intelligence. I am reminded almost daily in the briefings that we have that we live in a dangerous and chaotic world. It is unpredictable. It is becoming more so. It is dark and chaotic.

As Abraham Lincoln said, we are the "last best hope of Earth." That was true when he said it. It is true when I taught my children that. It will still be true when my children teach my grandchildren, but it will only be true if we stand by those principles that allow us to secure our own freedom and to protect the interests of our allies to whom we have made meaningful and important promises.

With that, we conclude this time, asking the President to listen to our concerns and to address them as he moves forward with this critically important issue.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. COMSTOCK). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 53 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 2130

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. FOXX) at 9 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 749, PASSENGER RAIL REFORM AND INVESTMENT ACT OF 2015, AND PROVIDING FOR PROCEEDINGS DURING THE PERIOD FROM MARCH 6, 2015, THROUGH MARCH 13, 2015

Mr. WOODALL, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 114-36) on the resolution (H. Res. 134) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 749) to reauthorize Federal support for passenger rail programs, and for other purposes, and providing for proceedings during the period from March 6, 2015, through March 13, 2015, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CRENSHAW (at the request of Mr. MCCARTHY) for today on account of travel delays due to inclement weather.

Mr. TONKO (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of attending a funeral.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker on Friday, February 27, 2015:

H.R. 33. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. WOODALL. Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, March 3, 2015, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

614. A letter from the Chair, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting the Board's semiannual Monetary Policy Report, pursuant to Pub. L. 106-569; to the Committee on Financial Services.

615. A letter from the Deputy Director, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's final rule — Head Start Program (RIN: 0970-AC46) received February 25, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

616. A letter from the Deputy Director, ODRM, CCHQ, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's Major final rule — Patient Protection

and Affordable Care Act; HHS Notice of Benefit and Payment Parameters for 2016 [CMS-9944-F] (RIN: 0938-AS19) received February 25, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

617. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the FY 2013 Performance Report to Congress for the Office of Combination Products, as required by the Medical Device User Fee and Modernization Act of 2002; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

618. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Final Report to Congress on the Implementation of Section 3507 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

619. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's report entitled "Annual Report to Congress on the Use of Mandatory Recall Authority", submitted pursuant to Sec. 206f of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act, Pub. L. 111-353; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

620. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Homeland Defense and Global Security, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Annual Report to Congress for Fiscal Year 2016, in accordance with Sec. 1341, 1342 and 1343 of the Department of Defense Cooperative Threat Reduction Act (50 U.S.C.); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

621. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy, transmitting the Department's final rule — Assistance to Foreign Atomic Energy Activities (RIN: 1994-AA02) received February 24, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

622. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a determination, pursuant to Sec. 451 of the Foreign Assistance Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

623. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 14-146, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Sec. 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

624. A letter from the Chief Information Security Officer, Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's FY 2014 Federal Information Security Management Act Report and Privacy Management Report, as directed by Pub. L. 107-347; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

625. A letter from the District of Columbia Auditor, Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, transmitting a report entitled "The District of Columbia Board of Elections Election Day Preparation and Administration Can Be Improved"; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

626. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, NMFS, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan; Amendment 7; Correction [Docket No.: 120328229-5064-03] (RIN: 0648-BC09) received February 24, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

627. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administra-

tion, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fisheries [Docket No.: 120328229-4949-02] (RIN: 0648-XD672) received February 24, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

628. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Atka Mackerel in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area [Docket No.: 131021878-4158-02] (RIN: 0648-XD750) received February 26, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

629. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, NMFS, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary final rule — Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Herring Fishery; Adjustments to 2015 Annual Catch Limits [Docket No.: 141002820-5113-01] (RIN: 0648-XD536) received February 24, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

630. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Atka Mackerel in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area [Docket No.: 131021878-4158-02] (RIN: 0648-XD744) received February 24, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

631. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pacific Cod in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area [Docket No.: 131021878-4158-02] (RIN: 0648-XD725) received February 24, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

632. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Pot Catcher/Processors in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area [Docket No.: 131021878-4158-02] (RIN: 0648-XD758) received February 28, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

633. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic; Trip Limit Reduction [Docket No.: 001005281-0369-02] (RIN: 0648-XD717) received February 24, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

634. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pollock in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands [Docket No.: 131021878-4158-02] (RIN: 0648-XD728) received February 24, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

635. A letter from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, De-

partment of Justice, transmitting the Department's quarterly report from the Office of Privacy and Civil Liberties for the second quarter of FY 2014, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 2000ee-1(f); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

636. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Foreign Tax Credit Splitting Events [TD 9710] (RIN: 1545-BK50) received February 25, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

637. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Extension for 2014 [Notice 2015-13] received February 25, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

638. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Round 2 of Section 48A Phase III Program under the Qualifying Advanced Coal Project Program [Notice 2015-14] received February 25, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

639. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Applicable Federal Rates — March 2015 (Rev. Rul. 2015-4) received February 25, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

640. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Small Business Modifications to Tangibles Method Changes (Rev. Proc. 2015-20) received February 25, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

641. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Excise Tax on High Cost Employer-Sponsored Health Coverage [Notice 2015-16] received February 25, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

642. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's report entitled "Report to Congress on the Administration, Cost and Impact of the Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) Program for Medicare Beneficiaries for Fiscal Year 2011"; jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. MILLER of Florida: Committee on Veterans' Affairs. H.R. 280. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to recoup bonuses and awards paid to employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs; with an amendment (Rept. 114-32, Pt. 1). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. SMITH of Texas: Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. H.R. 1029. A bill to amend the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978 to provide for Scientific Advisory Board member qualifications, public participation, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 114-33). Referred to the

Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. SMITH of Texas: Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. H.R. 1030. A bill to prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency from proposing, finalizing, or disseminating regulations or assessments based upon science that is not transparent or reproducible (Rept. 114-34). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. MILLER of Florida: Committee on Veterans' Affairs. H.R. 294. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts and agreements for the transfer of veterans to non-Department medical foster homes for certain veterans who are unable to live independently; with an amendment (Rept. 114-35). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WOODALL: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 134. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 749) to reauthorize Federal support for passenger rail programs, and for other purposes, and providing for proceedings during the period from March 6, 2015, through March 13, 2015 (Rept. 114-36). Referred to the House Calendar.

DISCHARGE OF COMMITTEE

Pursuant to clause 2 of rule XIII, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform discharged from further consideration. H.R. 280 referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. ROYCE (for himself and Mr. MEEKS):

H.R. 1188. A bill to amend the Federal Credit Union Act to provide certain credit unions with the authority to make additional member business loans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. KLINE (for himself, Mr. ROE of Tennessee, and Mr. WALBERG):

H.R. 1189. A bill to clarify rules relating to nondiscriminatory employer wellness programs as such programs relate to premium discounts, rebates, or modifications to otherwise applicable cost sharing under group health plans; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, and Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. ROE of Tennessee (for himself, Ms. LINDA T. SANCHEZ of California, Mr. POSEY, Mr. CULBERSON, Mr. SCHOCK, Mr. BYRNE, Mr. SIMPSON, Mr. MCCLINTOCK, Mr. THORNBERRY, Mr. RENACCI, Mr. GUINTA, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana, Mr. FINCHER, Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, Mrs. ROBY, Mr. BUCHANAN, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. ROONEY of Florida, Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, Mr. HUELSKAMP, Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. ROSKAM, Mr. CARTER of Georgia, Mr. COLLINS of New York, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. BUCK, Mr. TROTT, Mr. RIGELL, Ms. SINEMA, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Mr. NUNES, Mr. JODY B.

HICE of Georgia, Mr. CONAWAY, Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. DENT, Mr. ROSS, Mr. HOLDING, Mr. PERRY, Mr. OLSON, Mr. MASSIE, Mr. GRIFFITH, Mr. DENHAM, Mr. HARPER, Mr. RIBBLE, Mrs. ELLMERS of North Carolina, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. GOSAR, Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. PITTENGER, Mr. LANCE, Mr. TIPTON, Mr. JONES, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. SALMON, Mr. TIBERI, Mr. BURGESS, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. TURNER, Mr. JOLLY, Mr. MCKINLEY, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Mr. PALAZZO, Mr. ROTHFUS, Mr. BARR, Mr. WHITFIELD, Mrs. COMSTOCK, Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mrs. WAGNER, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. BLUM, Mr. RUIZ, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. CLAWSON of Florida, Mr. WOMACK, Mr. VALADAO, Mr. WESTERMAN, Mr. KLINE, Mr. POMPEO, Mr. AMODEI, Mr. RICE of South Carolina, Mr. MULVANEY, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. COURTNEY, Mr. BARLETTA, Mr. SMITH of Nebraska, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. BENISHEK, Mr. BUCSHON, Mr. HARRIS, Mr. MCCAUL, Mrs. BLACK, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. DESJARLAIS, Mr. FLORES, Mr. GUTHRIE, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. GIBBS, Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, Mr. LATTA, Mr. YODER, Mr. LONG, Mr. GOODLATTE, Mrs. WALORSKI, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Mr. PEARCE, Mr. AMASH, Mr. DUFFY, Mr. JOYCE, Mr. LAMALFA, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. HENSARLING, Mr. FORTENBERRY, Mr. CHABOT, Mr. HUDSON, Mr. PETERSON, Mr. FARENTHOLD, Mr. GRAVES of Missouri, Mr. WEBER of Texas, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. POLIQUIN, Mr. HULTGREN, Mr. PETERS, Mr. CRENSHAW, Mr. STEWART, Mr. RUSSELL, Mrs. NOEM, Mr. BERA, Ms. ESTY, Mr. MARINO, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. Cárdenas, Mr. WITTMAN, Mr. YOUNG of Iowa, Mr. YOHIO, Mr. YOUNG of Indiana, Mr. POE of Texas, Mr. BRAT, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. BABIN, Mr. BISHOP of Michigan, Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois, Mr. HURD of Texas, Mr. ZINKE, Mr. COFFMAN, Mr. STIVERS, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. WEBSTER of Florida, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. BROOKS of Alabama, Mr. CURBELO of Florida, Mr. DESANTIS, Mr. CHAFFETZ, Mr. GOWDY, Mr. COOK, Mr. HECK of Nevada, Mr. FLEISCHMANN, Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. MCHENRY, Mr. CRAWFORD, Ms. JENKINS of Kansas, Mr. ROKITA, Mr. HILL, Mr. LUTKEMEYER, Mr. MESSER, Mr. WENSTRUP, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. BOUSTANY, Mr. FLEMING, Mr. GIBSON, Mr. HURT of Virginia, Mr. GRAVES of Georgia, Mr. FORBES, Mr. TOM PRICE of Georgia, Mr. PAULSEN, Mrs. LUMMIS, Mr. NUGENT, Mr. STUTZMAN, Mr. MEADOWS, Mr. ROUZER, Mr. GROTHMAN, Mr. WILLIAMS, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. REED, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. DOLD, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. ROYCE, and Mr. RATCLIFFE):

H.R. 1190. A bill to repeal the provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act providing for the Independent Payment Advisory Board; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, and Rules, for

a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BARLETTA:

H.R. 1191. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. OLSON (for himself, Mr.

LOEBACK, Mr. WHITFIELD, Ms. DEGETTE, Ms. NORTON, Mr. FARENTHOLD, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Mr. GUTHRIE, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HECK of Nevada, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, Mr. COLLINS of New York, Mr. MCKINLEY, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. JOYCE, Mr. NEAL, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. RUSH, Ms. BROWN of Florida, Mr. BARLETTA, Mr. BUCSHON, Mr. BUCHANAN, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Ms. SPEIER, Ms. EDWARDS, Mr. LONG, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. DELBENE, Ms. TITUS, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mr. WITTMAN, Mr. YOUNG of Indiana, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. HIMES, Mr. RANGEL, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mr. DELANEY, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. PETERS, Mr. PETERSON, Mr. RUIZ, and Mr. BURGESS):

H.R. 1192. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to foster more effective implementation and coordination of clinical care for people with pre-diabetes, diabetes, and the chronic diseases and conditions that result from diabetes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. KILMER (for himself, Mr.

JONES, Ms. NORTON, Mr. TAKAI, Ms. TITUS, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. GABBARD, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. BISHOP of Utah, Ms. KUSTER, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. NORCROSS, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. TONKO, Mr. COLE, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. BEYER, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. PETERS, Mr. POCAN, and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania):

H.R. 1193. A bill to prohibit any reduction in the amount of the per diem allowance to which members of the uniformed services or civilian employees of the Department of Defense are entitled based on the duration of temporary duty assignments or official travel, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania (for himself and Mr. DESAULNIER):

H.R. 1194. A bill to strengthen families' engagement in the education of their children; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. PITTENGER (for himself and Mr. HECK of Washington):

H.R. 1195. A bill to amend the Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010 to establish advisory boards, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. BURGESS:

H.R. 1196. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify rules relating to health savings accounts; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the

Committees on the Judiciary, and Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. CASTOR of Florida (for herself and Mrs. ELLMERS of North Carolina):

H.R. 1197. A bill to provide for the establishment of a Commission to Accelerate the End of Breast Cancer; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. CONNOLLY (for himself, Mr. JOYCE, Mr. KEATING, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. GRAYSON, Mr. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. TONKO, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. POCAN, Mr. SLAUGHTER, Mr. WELCH, and Ms. BROWN of Florida):

H.R. 1198. A bill to extend the right of appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board to certain employees of the United States Postal Service; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. FARENTHOLD (for himself, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, Mr. CRAWFORD, and Ms. JENKINS of Kansas):

H.R. 1199. A bill to prevent undue disruption of interstate commerce by limiting civil actions brought against persons whose only role with regard to a product in the stream of commerce is as a lawful seller of the product; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. McDERMOTT:

H.R. 1200. A bill to provide for health care for every American and to control the cost and enhance the quality of the health care system; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, Oversight and Government Reform, Armed Services, and Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. GRANGER (for herself, Ms. BASS, and Mr. POE of Texas):

H.R. 1201. A bill to combat human trafficking; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. JENKINS of Kansas (for herself and Mr. THOMPSON of California):

H.R. 1202. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the recognition of attending physician assistants as attending physicians to serve hospice patients, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. MCKINLEY (for himself, Mr. PETERSON, Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia, and Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia):

H.R. 1203. A bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to clarify that the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency does not have the authority to disapprove a permit after it has been issued by the Secretary of the Army under section 404 of such Act; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Ms. NORTON:

H.R. 1204. A bill to extend to the Mayor of the District of Columbia the same authority over the National Guard of the District of

Columbia as the Governors of the several States exercise over the National Guard of those States with respect to administration of the National Guard and its use to respond to natural disasters and other civil disturbances, while ensuring that the President retains control of the National Guard of the District of Columbia to respond to homeland defense emergencies; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. ROGERS of Alabama (for himself, Mr. MASSIE, Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, Mr. WESTMORELAND, and Mr. HUELSKAMP):

H.R. 1205. A bill to end membership of the United States in the United Nations; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. ROUZER:

H.R. 1206. A bill to prohibit the hiring of additional Internal Revenue Service employees until the Secretary of the Treasury certifies that no employee of the Internal Revenue Service has a seriously delinquent tax debt; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. WITTMAN:

H.R. 1207. A bill to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to require the Secretary of Commerce to develop a plan to conduct stock assessments for all stocks of fish for which a fishery management plan is in effect under that Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mrs. MILLER of Michigan:

H. Res. 132. A resolution providing for the expenses of certain committees of the House of Representatives in the One Hundred Fourteenth Congress; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mr. KING of Iowa (for himself, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. SALMON, Mr. FLEMING, Mr. JONES, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. ROHRBACHER, Mr. BYRNE, Mr. RICE of South Carolina, Mr. YOHO, Mr. GRIFFITH, Mr. LAMALFA, Mr. OLSON, Mr. BARLETTA, Mr. NUGENT, Mr. BUCK, Mr. PALAZZO, and Mr. SANFORD):

H. Res. 133. A resolution relating to consideration of the bill (H.R. 240) appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015; to the Committee on Rules.

By Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois (for himself and Mrs. DAVIS of California):

H. Res. 135. A resolution encouraging people in the United States to recognize March 2, 2015, as Read Across America Day; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. TOM PRICE of Georgia:

H. Res. 136. A resolution recognizing Linemen, the profession of Linemen, and the contributions of these brave men and women to protect public safety, and expressing support of designation of April 18, 2015, as National Lineman Appreciation Day; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

MEMORIALS

Under clause 3 of rule XII,

11. The SPEAKER presented a memorial of the Legislature of the State of Florida, relative to House Memorial 281, urging the President of the United States to issue final approval for construction and completion of the Keystone XL pipeline project; jointly to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure, Energy and Commerce, and Natural Resources.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following statements are submitted regarding the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution.

By Mr. ROYCE:

H.R. 1188.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Under Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution to regulate commerce.

By Mr. KLINE:

H.R. 1189.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, section 8, clause 3 of the Constitution of the United States

By Mr. ROE of Tennessee:

H.R. 1190.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The repeal of this provision is consistent with the powers that are reserved to the States and to the people as expressed in Amendment X to the United States Constitution.

By Mr. BARLETTA:

H.R. 1191.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clauses 1 and 18 of the U.S. Constitution

By Mr. OLSON:

H.R. 1192.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18.

By Mr. KILMER:

H.R. 1193.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania:

H.R. 1194.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18; and including, but not solely limited to the 14th Amendment.

By Mr. PITTINGER:

H.R. 1195.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution

By Mr. BURGESS:

H.R. 1196.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section VIII, Clause 1 which states "The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States; but all duties, imposts and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States." In addition, Congress has the authority to enact this legislation pursuant to Article I, Section VIII, Clause 3 which states "To regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes."

By Ms. CASTOR of Florida:

H.R. 1197.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 of the United States Constitution

By Mr. CONNOLLY:

H.R. 1198.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 7 and Clause 18 of the Constitution of the United States.

By Mr. FARENTHOLD:

H.R. 1199.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clauses 3, 9, and 18 of the Constitution

By Mr. McDERMOTT:

H.R. 1200.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1

By Ms. GRANGER:

H.R. 1201.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8

By Ms. JENKINS of Kansas:

H.R. 1202.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8:

The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States.

By Mr. MCKINLEY:

H.R. 1203.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

According to Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the Constitution: The Congress shall have power to enact this legislation to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes.

By Ms. NORTON:

H.R. 1204.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
clause 17 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution.

By Mr. ROGERS of Alabama:

H.R. 1205.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This legislation is authorized by Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution: "To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States."

By Mr. ROUZER:

H.R. 1206.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1

The Congress shall have the Power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debt and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States.

By Mr. WITTMAN:

H.R. 1207.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact this bill.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 130: Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia.

H.R. 219: Mr. SWALWELL of California.

H.R. 232: Ms. TSONGAS.

H.R. 235: Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. HULTGREN, Mr. HURD of Texas, Mr. GRAVES of Missouri, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, and Mr. DESANTIS.

H.R. 248: Mr. STIVERS.

H.R. 294: Mr. NORCROSS.

H.R. 304: Mr. NORCROSS and Mr. PERLMUTTER.

H.R. 353: Mr. GROTHMAN and Mr. SENSENBRENNER.

H.R. 358: Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. HIMES, and Mr. YOHO.

H.R. 359: Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. LOEBACK, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mr. HIMES, Mr. LIPINSKI, Ms. NORTON, and Mr. POCAN.

H.R. 393: Mr. SCHIFF.

H.R. 394: Mr. SCHIFF and Mr. FATTAH.

H.R. 402: Mr. SALMON.

H.R. 470: Mr. CARTER of Georgia.

H.R. 509: Ms. ESHOO, Mr. ENGEL, and Mr. SWALWELL of California.

H.R. 537: Mr. BURGESS.

H.R. 559: Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN.

H.R. 578: Mr. CRENSHAW, Mr. PITTENGER, Mr. KLINE, Mr. BUCSHON, Mr. HANNA, and Mr. GUTHRIE.

H.R. 592: Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. BOST, Mr. ALLEN, and Mr. WALZ.

H.R. 602: Mr. CARSON of Indiana and Mr. AMODEI.

H.R. 663: Mr. TONKO.

H.R. 703: Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 708: Ms. JENKINS of Kansas.

H.R. 747: Mr. VARGAS.

H.R. 768: Ms. JUDY CHU of California.

H.R. 769: Mr. ALLEN.

H.R. 775: Mr. HECK of Washington, Mr. AMODEI, Mr. FINCHER, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. STEWART, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Ms. NORTON, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. DEFazio, Mr. FITZPATRICK, and Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.

H.R. 776: Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. SHIMKUS, and Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan.

H.R. 793: Mr. PETERSON, Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia, and Mr. WALZ.

H.R. 802: Mr. COURTNEY, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. GRAYSON, and Mr. HASTINGS.

H.R. 816: Mr. LUETKEMEYER.

H.R. 823: Mr. SWALWELL of California, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, and Ms. ESTY.

H.R. 824: Mr. FORBES, Mr. ROUZER, and Mr. GARRETT.

H.R. 825: Mr. COLLINS of New York, Mr. MCKINLEY, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. YODER, and Mr. KING of New York.

H.R. 846: Ms. DELAURO, Miss RICE of New York, Ms. BONAMICI, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Mr. CARNEY, and Mr. MCNERNEY.

H.R. 855: Mrs. BEATTY.

H.R. 860: Mr. VARGAS.

H.R. 863: Mr. PALAZZO, Mr. AMODEI, Mr. GIBBS, Mr. PETERSON, Mr. CARTER of Georgia, Mr. GROTHMAN, and Mr. MURPHY of Florida.

H.R. 868: Mr. DEFazio and Mr. FORTENBERRY.

H.R. 913: Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, and Mr. RANGEL.

H.R. 923: Mr. BENISHEK.

H.R. 928: Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mr. MCCLINTOCK, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. ASHFORD, and Ms. BROWNLEY of California.

H.R. 944: Ms. CASTOR of Florida.

H.R. 951: Mr. FARENTHOLD.

H.R. 960: Ms. KAPTUR.

H.R. 970: Mr. FRANKS of Arizona.

H.R. 985: Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. HARPER, Mr. BUCSHON, Mr. MCKINLEY, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, and Mr. WHITFIELD.

H.R. 1021: Mrs. NOEM.

H.R. 1024: Mr. BARLETTA, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. FOSTER, Miss RICE of New York, Mr. VARGAS, and Mr. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 1025: Ms. MOORE, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. TAKANO, and Mr. GRIJALVA.

H.R. 1031: Mr. SABLON and Mr. PIERLUISI.

H.R. 1032: Ms. DELBENE.

H.R. 1063: Mr. REED, Ms. BONAMICI, and Mr. REICHERT.

H.R. 1078: Mr. BURGESS, Mr. VALADAO, Mr. WELCH, Mr. PETERS, and Ms. BROWNLEY of California.

H.R. 1086: Mr. HECK of Nevada and Mr. SESSIONS.

H.R. 1091: Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Ms. ROSELEHTINEN, and Ms. BROWN of Florida.

H.R. 1092: Mr. CURBELO of Florida, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Mr. MURPHY of Florida, Ms. BROWN of Florida, and Ms. FRANKEL of Florida.

H.R. 1093: Mr. MCGOVERN.

H.R. 1094: Mr. YOHO, Mrs. BLACKBURN, and Mr. SALMON.

H.R. 1095: Ms. JUDY CHU of California.

H.R. 1098: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 1133: Mrs. TORRES.

H.R. 1142: Mr. MESSER.

H.R. 1147: Mr. WEBER of Texas, Mr. MCCLINTOCK, Mr. LOUDERMILK, and Mr. ISSA.

H.R. 1148: Mr. LOUDERMILK and Mr. WEBER of Texas.

H.R. 1149: Mr. WEBER of Texas.

H.R. 1153: Mr. ROE of Tennessee, Mr. DESJARLAIS, Mr. WEBER of Texas, and Mr. LOUDERMILK.

H.J. Res. 9: Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. HUELSKAMP, and Mr. LOBIONDO.

H.J. Res. 33: Mr. CURBELO of Florida.

H. Con. Res. 17: Mr. HUELSKAMP, Mr. HECK of Nevada, Mr. O'ROURKE, Mr. KILMER, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. CLAY, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. SMITH of Nebraska, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mrs. WAGNER, and Mr. SMITH of Missouri.

H. Res. 11: Mr. NEUGEBAUER.

H. Res. 28: Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. RUSH, Mrs. TORRES, Mr. PIERLUISI, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Ms. NORTON, and Mr. TONKO.

H. Res. 54: Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. SIREN, Mrs. TORRES, Ms. NORTON, and Mr. GRAYSON.

H. Res. 112: Mr. WALZ.

H. Res. 120: Mr. COHEN and Mr. CICILLINE.